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AUTUMN RAMBLES

IN

NORTH AFRICA.

OASIS OF EL KANTRA.
North limit of the Sahara.

Frontispiece. [Page 56.

AUTUMN RAMBLES

IN

NORTH AFRICA.

BY JOHN ORMSBY,

OF THE MIDDLE TEMPLE.

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ac

'O me, my pleasant rambles——'—TENNYSON.

I am a stranger to you, and you to me: if you be going this way, I shall be glad of your company; if not, I must be content.'—PILGRIM'S PROGRESS.

WITH ILLUSTRATIONS FROM THE SKETCHES OF THE AUTHOR.

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LONDON:

LONGMAN, GREEN, LONGMAN, ROBERTS, & GREEN.

1864.

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TO

MY FRIENDS IN ALGERIA,

MILITARY AND CIVIL,

TO WHOSE ASSISTANCE AND SOCIETY

I OWE MUCH OF THE ENJOYMENT OF THESE RAMBLES.

PREFACE.

From the days of Sir John Mandeville downward, the purpose of a Preface has been to show the author's consideration for his species, and his desire to make himself useful.

Rambling Sketches—I do not call them Pictures of Travel—of this sort, giving the practical experience of a vacation tourist, would have been most welcome to me when I was about to make the experiment of a holiday in Algeria; and I venture to hope that these, if they are good for nothing else, may be of use to some brother holiday-maker.

Still further to meet his requirements, I have added a chapter of such hints as two seasons' wanderings suggested, about the route to be adopted, the mode of life, manner of travelling, and other similar points. This addition will also serve to supply the missing link required to connect some of the rambles described;

the chapters which precede it having been reprinted from *Fraser's Magazine*, where they appeared separately, as occasional magazine articles, and at considerable intervals.

The present may not seem, perhaps, the most fitting moment to recommend a tour in Algeria and Tunis. But disturbances like those now rife in the east and west are only temporary. Tunis will soon settle down, and the insurrection in Oran can have only one end. Besides, the reader must recollect that there is no more reason for avoiding the country I have described on account of a rising in Oran, than for abstaining from a Swiss tour because the Dalmatians might happen to be in arms. Nor is there, I think, the least danger of the insurrection spreading into the province of Constantina. The Arabs of Constantina are a very different people from those of Oran; and France is, and always has been, far more firmly established there than in the western parts of her African dominions.

French Colonisation and French Rule in Africa I have merely touched upon incidentally and here and there. The subject has been already fully and ably handled by Mr. G. Wingrove Cooke; besides, it is not one which has any great interest for the mere vacation tourist.

except in so far as it affects his personal comfort. He, at any rate, has no right to complain of a conquest which enables him to explore, with ease and safety, regions a few years ago inaccessible to Europeans; and perhaps, if he compares the neighbouring States of Morocco and Tunis with Algeria, he will think that even the Arabs have not much real cause for complaint, 'sua si bona nôrint.' As to French Colonisation, I fear the impression he will carry away will be, that it is, even at the best, but a hothouse plant: that, except in one or two favoured districts, it may be described in the same terms as the snakes of Iceland; and that in Algeria, in nineteen cases out of twenty, a colonist means only a camp-follower.

June 1864.

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AUTUMN RAMBLES

IN

NORTH AFRICA.

CHAPTER I.

FROM MARSEILLES TO PHILIPPEVILLE.

TO the traveller bound for Africa, a couple of days at Marseilles is a capital preparative. As the mystic gridiron of the Freemasons, according to the popular superstition, serves to try the pluck of the neophyte, and to show whether or not he has nerve enough for further ordeals, Marseilles, with its heat and glare, mistral and mosquitoes, tests the patience and firmness of purpose of any adventurous spirit who may have conceived the design of taking his pleasure among the palm-groves of the Sahara. Nor are there wanting experts who, if he makes known his intention, will put his resolution to further proof. A remark on the heat will generally bring out some allusions to the sufferings of the soldiers in Algeria. Hint that the mistral is not as refreshing as a zephyr, and you are

requested not to venture an opinion on that or any other wind before you have felt a puff of the sirocco; and as for mosquitoes, just wait till you get to Algiers, that's all. The last admonition is the one which will make the deepest impression, if you have already paid that octroi duty which these unrelenting insects generally contrive to levy on everyone bringing fresh blood into the Marseilles market. Over-night perhaps, following a natural impulse and being, as the poet says, 'unawares of the ways of this bad town,' you opened your bed-room window before seeking the couch where you expected, as you had every right to do, to sleep the sleep of the just. Most travellers who have sojourned in a Mediterranean port, and are not blessed with a cuticle of the colour and substance of their own portmanteaus, know the sort of night that follows an indiscretion of this sort. As you are dropping off to sleep, there comes at you from the outer darkness a blast of a fiercely blown little trumpet, which vibrates in your ears like the note of a very shrill musical glass; and, if you are at all familiar with the sound, drives sleep away at once. The first thing to be done is to shut the window, and in the course of this operation you damage your fingers with that combination of crank and lever employed to fasten windows in France. Your temper is thus dangerously roused, and with towel and lighted taper you go forth to battle, determined to spare neither age nor sex. In the blindness

of your wrath you murder a couple of innocent sleeping flies, and smash a late spider who is hurrying home to bed up the wall; but of the enemy you can see nothing. He is in ambush, however, watching you, for no sooner are you in bed and the candle out than he returns to the charge. Then you think of trying stratagem, and letting him settle before you attack him. After a prolonged fantasia in something unusually sharp, the music comes to a sudden stop, and you prepare to steal out your hand for a match, when sting! goes his stiletto into the corner of your left eyelid, and instinctively you deal yourself a thwack on the adjacent organ that for the moment produces the effect of the final burst of fireworks at Cremorne. Surely you hit him that time, you think; but you did n't, and he comes down on you again as soon as you are quiet; and so, with sorties and retreats and severe punishment about the face—and perhaps, if you have mosquito curtains, a diversion created by setting fire to the house—the night drags on until at last, wearied out and fairly beaten off, you bid him bite his best, and fall into a dogged doze and dream that you are being pursued down very steep steps on account of an informality in your passport by the whole French army, which somehow changes into a cloud of mosquitoes just as you are getting away. But the sorest trial comes with the morning light. The field of Waterloo on the morning of the 19th was

not a more touching spectacle than that which your glass presents to you. Left eye nearly closed; eyelid pendulous, looking like a little sack of currant jelly, and forcing you to regard nature with a wink fixed and rueful; forehead all over bumps like the crust of a pigeon-pie or the surface of a common where the moles have been burrowing. Nay, more than this. There are yet other woes in store for you, for is there not an unusual feeling about the tip of your nose? Surely the accursed insect cannot have violated the sanctity of that sacred feature? And yet, now that you come to look at it, there does seem to be something wrong; it is far redder than it has any right to be in a person of your strictly temperate habits, and viewed sideways, there is a decided lump on the end of it. This is the cruellest blow of all. Now, you think you could have been happy with a closed eye and a knobby forehead. What is even a black eye to a nose that is gradually assuming—for you do feel it swelling—the dimensions and colour of a tomato! There is something rudely heroic about a black eye; it may have been received in defence of beauty and virtue, but the expression of your unfortunate countenance is simply comical, and here you are condemned to go about for at least eight-and-forty hours (supposing you don't get bitten again) with bitterness in your heart, irritation in your skin, and a physiognomy as grotesque as a pantomime mask. How are you to face that excessively jocular and

obviously unfeeling old major below stairs who is on his way to join his regiment in India, and the uncommonly pleasant family who are going to Nice, including the being who is all soul and sat next you at the *table-d'hôte* yesterday? If you were in spirits you might sing her a comic song with wonderful effect, but with such a nose and eye you cannot attempt to quote poetry as you did last night. And you get no sympathy, or if you do, it is of an offensive kind. The major recommends you to wear a raw beefsteak on your nose, and the head garçon says, 'Mon Dieu! mais, monsieur, vous êtes abimé,' and assures you you must have brought the mosquito in your baggage, for such a thing was never known in the house before.

There is, however, one fact about Marseilles which to some extent compensates the traveller for this and other discomforts. In no city in the world is he let off so cheaply in the matter of 'chief objects of interest' There is nothing which 'you really must see,' or about which you need be the least uneasy lest it should rise up in judgment against you hereafter, as 'the finest thing of its kind in Europe,' or 'the greatest loss you ever had.' You are not obliged to spend half a day, looking for the Rue des Senteurs, where stands the cabaret of the Poisson Vieux, beneath whose humble roof the gallant anybody did anything. The many 'eminent,' 'illustrious,' and 'ill-fated' men who might

have taken this sort of advantage of posterity have been considerate enough to be born and buried nowhere in particular. There is not even, I believe, a single picture 'of which Sir Joshua Reynolds has left the following eloquent criticism.' One sight, indeed, there is which may be gratifying to travellers of a certain temperament. Perched on one of those bare grey hills that surround Marseilles, and looking down on the housetops and omnibus-roofs of the city, is the chapel of Notre Dame de la Garde, the great centre of the devotion of Marseilles and the neighbourhood. All day sleek priests, with their petticoats daintily tucked up, and ancient mariners and matrons, in general fully blown—for the path is steep, are climbing the steps which lead from the city up to the chapel. Especially in time of trouble, when war or cholera is raging or the equinoctial gales blow, for the good people of Marseilles believe that 'in great emergencies there is nothing like a prayer' to Notre Dame de la Garde, and the shrine, like the Funds at home, serves to indicate the extent of public anxiety, the only difference being, that instead of saying there was a fall of so many per cent., they say, so many went up to Our Lady of the Look-out yesterday. From floor to roof the chapel is hung with votive knick-knacks, and probably no church in Christendom so practically denies the doctrine that faith without works (of art) avails anything. It looks like something between the Suffolk-street Gallery and the

United Service Museum. The walls are covered with pictures of accidents by flood and field, of steamers blowing up and fishing-boats going down, of death-bed scenes and surgical operations, each with its label setting forth by whom it was presented 'ex voto;' while from above dangle models of ships, pairs of crutches, legs, arms, and other emblems of danger or suffering. There is a little shop outside for the sale of the commoner articles of this sort, where they also keep in stock a few good plain sea-pieces and shipwrecks, much recommended for ordinary use. I do not think, however, it does as good a business as an adjacent establishment, where there is provision for the flesh in the form of absinthe and lemonade. No British tourist who keeps a journal, and is fond of recording his 'impressions,' should neglect the chance. If he belong to the old comfortable glorious-constitutional school of travellers which is now nearly extinct, he will have a rare opportunity for expressing his contempt of the 'degrading and superstitious practices which shock the eye at every turn in these countries.' On the other hand, the sentimental and cosmopolitan order of mind will also find food for meditation. There, for instance, is a poor old soul who has come up to pray for Jacques or Pierre, who is away on the Cochin China expedition, and to vow, at the least, a candle if he comes back safe and sound. Should we not respect her simple piety? Tread lightly, my brother, as you pass that meekly bending figure.

Disturb her not, for that sound sleep she is enjoying will be very refreshing after such a fatiguing ascent on such a hot day.

Notre Dame de la Garde excepted, there is nothing to do at Marseilles, unless it be to lounge on the quays. To a thorough-bred lounger—not a *flaneur*, he is of Paris Parisian, and is unhappy off the Boulevards, but a real *con amore* stroller—there is a peculiar attraction about quays. The stir and bustle afford him that pleasure an indolent man always takes in witnessing activity in which he is not obliged to take a share; and he finds there in the greatest abundance the class of object he loves to contemplate. By some law as yet unexplained, all the eccentricities of a city gravitate towards its quays. There and thereabouts are congregated invariably the men who are engaged in abnormal trades, who belong to exceptional professions, who deal in articles that you fancy no one ever purchased except in a dream or in a pantomime. There are plenty of cities in Europe that afford facilities for the indulgence of this pastime. In Paris, for instance, what noble sauntering ground there is in the cheerful neighbourhood of the Morgue, where the old curiosity shops are; and between the Pont Neuf and the Pont des Arts, where the river wall is crowned with trays of coins, and medals, and Rembrandt etchings manufactured in the adjacent Latin quarter, and little religious books fifty centimes *au choix;* at Rotterdam, under the trees of the Boompjes,

where the wanderer 'slacks his course, cheered with the grateful smell' of cinnamon, and rum, and molasses; at Bordeaux, where the peaceful retainers of the rival castles of Lafitte, La Rose, and Margaux stand eager for the chance of drawing a sample in the cause of their chieftains; at Antwerp, where the busy steamers are stirring up the lazy Scheld, and protesting with all their force of waste pipe and paddle against the dreamy old-world influence of the cathedral chimes;—above all, along that paradise of idlers which lies beneath the pillar of St. Mark at Venice, where Shylock has walked up and down many a time with young members of the council, and talked about the impossibility of renewing, and where now the pigeons (who also, by the way, seem to have their little bill transactions with one another) strut gravely in the sunshine, looking for a livelihood.

But none of these cities can show anything fit to compare with the quays of Marseilles. The long strip of dirty water called the Old Port—an old port crusted with abominations, and so 'peculiar' that the very fish will not touch it—is covered with ships of every nation and build, and the pavement at each side is crowded with human craft displaying a corresponding variety of rig. It may be observed that there is a curious likeness between these men and the vessels they belong to. Between Tom Bowling of Deptford and that cousin of his, Enoch Bowling, who maintains discipline on the high seas with knuckle-dusters and belaying

pins, there is a difference very much like that which exists between the Susan of London and that rakish barque, the Ephraim P. Slogger of New York; while red-shirted, bristly-bearded, unwashed Mons. Bolin of Dieppe, may be at once distinguished from either by very nearly the same features which serve to distinguish his ship, the Princesse Mathilde, from the other two vessels. And any one of these, again, as he rolls along up the quay in nether garments painfully taut in parts, differs from Tomaso Bolino of Genoa, or that baggy-breeched Boulingos from Smyrna, quite as much as a brig under double-reefed topsails from the loose lateen-rigged craft of the Mediterranean. They all agree, however, in wearing their hats, or scull-caps, or red jellybags, as near the nape of the neck as possible; in having a kind of lurching gait, as if there was a heavy ground-swell, and not enough wind to give them steerage way; and in always sailing in small fleets of four and five, telling yarns, as far as one can judge. Even the yarns, I venture to say, have a strong family likeness, and whether in Greek, or Turkish, or Italian, are merely versions of the one which Tom is spinning to his two messmates, and of which the following fragment reaches the ear—'But *I* warn't agoing to stand that, you know, so I ups and sez, "Bill," sez I, "you're a;"' the rest of the speech and the character assigned to Bill being lost to the reporter through an adjournment of the discussion into a house that bears on its window the

legend, 'Englich bier.' It is a curious, and of course a sad fact, that here as well as in other Continental seaports, the English language appears chiefly in the form of invitations to liquor. It is to be feared that, where'er he roams, whatever realms he sees, poor Tom's taste untravell'd fondly turns to the stimulants of his youth, and forces the foreign purveyor to provide him with 'rhum' and 'portare,' and 'punsch,' and 'grocs.'* Next to the English, the Greeks seem to be the people most cared for by the Marseilles tradesmen. For their benefit the marine store of M. George Ventura is, with Homeric sonorousness described as *Κατάστημα Γεωργέου Βεντοῦρα.* In fact, all their little wants and comforts are seen to. Another Philhellene calls attention to his *ἀναγκαῖον πρὸς* 5 *ἑκατοστά,* and a grandiloquent barber introduces himself as *κουρεὺς τῶν Ἑλλήνων.* Fancy getting your hair cut in Greek! I wonder how he coaxes a customer to buy a pot of regenerative unction, and whether he employs the language of Demosthenes on the Crown when he tells him his hair is getting rather thin on the top.

Wonderfully perfect in their cosmopolitanism are these quays of Marseilles. There are places where you can get medical advice in any language from Cockney to Coptic; clothiers who keep ready-made every article

* Notice to Members of the Temperance League.—This observation is copyright. Any platform-speaker or pamphleteer making use of it will be proceeded against.

from a kilt to a yashmak, and who will turn you out dressed in any known costume, at five minutes' notice; hatters who would make nothing of an order for half a dozen turbans. You might indeed indulge in any eccentricity that money would enable you to perpetrate. You might purchase a complete outfit for the Polar regions, or set up a menagerie, or furnish a library, or establish a museum, or fit out a privateer at a moment's notice, or without being obliged to walk more than ten yards in any direction. On one side is Marseilles Mosès, who tempts you with his 'choix de dix mille pantalons à quinze francs.' On the other the canary and parrot merchant, whose door is guarded by a moulting and feeble-minded old cockatoo, that sits blinking in the sun and laughing horribly over his tin pannikin of bread and water. Then there is the shop of the dealer in marine curiosities, who exhibits shells so monstrous and many-chambered that no reasonable mollusc could have lived in them without taking in lodgers, and puts in his window hideous prickly fish, that look at you with staring eyes and gaping mouths, as if you were a ghost. And then there are watch-makers who manufacture a serviceable sea-going article, just like Captain Cuttle's; and dealers in ship furniture, who sell binnacles, and logs, and marling-spikes, and harpoons, and shark-hooks, and other objects that recall to your mind the days when you used to read Peter Parley's Tales about the Sea. But in the window of a

dentist hard by, who with a bitter humour arranges his patients' teeth in grim arabesques upon a black board, you may see an object even more suggestive of the wonders of the ocean. It looks like a chest protector, but is in reality an 'apparel contre le mal de mer.' A label, considerately printed in English as well as in French, gives directions for its use. You are to apply it 'to the pit of the stomach by means of the strings adapted to his lateral parts, whilst the string forming the handle is passed round the neck, and prevents it sliping downwards. *Nota*—This apparatus don't sticks to the skin, and leaves none trace.' The delicate attention shown in offering to make English travellers participators in such an inestimable boon, will, I trust, be appreciated by every one who knows in what light the French regard the *mal de mer*.

It was our great staple of conversation for the first day on board the Messageries Impériales steamer *Chellif*, bound for Stora, Bona, and Tunis; and I believe before we were well out of the harbour everybody on board knew exactly what were the hopes and fears of everybody else regarding the dreaded malady. There certainly was nothing to justify any extraordinary apprehensions. Sea or sky could not by any possibility look more thoroughly good-humoured. The mistral had been succeeded by a light westerly wind, which just wrinkled and crisped the blue Mediterranean in the distance. The white lateen sails of the outward-bound

fishing boats and the white buildings on the rocky islands of Rattoneau and Pomégue glittered cheerily in the sunshine. Even grim old Chateau d'If seemed to look down in a good-natured way on the little dimples of waves that played about its feet, like a well-meaning Newfoundland watching the frolics of a kitten; and altogether gave one the idea of having washed off the burnt cork of its melodramatic days, and settled down as a respectable and inflexible coast-guard station. I must say it was only among the upper ten thousand of the quarter-deck that there seemed to be any misgivings. Impending nausea produced no effect on the jollity of the third class and deck passengers. These were, with scarcely an exception, soldiers returning after sick-leave or furlough to rejoin their regiments in Africa; and of course they immediately made themselves perfectly at home, as French soldiers will anywhere, and under any circumstances. Long before we were out of the bay they were as firmly established on the deck as if they were in a winter camp, with the intention of commencing operations against the funnel in spring. Cunningly devised tents and awnings were set up to keep off the sun, impromptu beds made up with great coats and bits of sail-cloth, or anything that came to hand. The manufacture of cigarettes set in with severity, and poor Jack of the steamer, after one or two feeble attempts to keep things more ship-shape, was forced to yield to military organisation and retire to the forecastle.

The quarter-deck, I observe, takes a much longer time to settle down. Nearly every one has brought up a book, acting on that mistaken notion that the deck of a vessel at sea is a good place for reading. But somehow Edmund About and the last pamphlet on the last 'Question' remain uncut, and hour after hour slips by in watching the groups in the waist, and listening to snatches of bivouac songs, and in talking to one another about our respective destinations. As it is in the fore part of the vessel, so it is here. The military element is strongly predominant. There are, however, some three or four civilians bound for Constantina or Tunis on commercial business, and one who is bound for Algeria generally, and is forced to admit he has no business of any sort there, which, from the unusualness of the circumstance, makes him an object of some curiosity, and a recipient of a good deal of conflicting advice as to what he ought to do. And here, *in limine*, and once for all, let me say, that one of the pleasantest recollections the tourist will bring away with him from North Africa will be of the many kindnesses he will be sure to receive at the hands of the officers of the French army. Algeria is so completely a military colony that they seem to consider themselves in some sort the hosts of the stranger who comes to visit it, and are always friendly, and kindly, and anxious to do the honours of the country.

It is wonderful, considering that you do next to nothing, how fast the time slips by at sea. The sailor,

who has to notify how many bells it is, seems to be always coming aft for that purpose. No sooner is breakfast down and digested, than the steward begins to make the circuit of the deck, telling every one that dinner is on the table. And so the day goes in utter sensuality, eating, drinking, smoking; watching the waves as they go spinning by with a hiss and gurgle; and perhaps, in moments of extraordinary mental activity, looking out over the sea, and speculating on the destination and nationality of some chance sail in the offing.

By way of experiment, the second day we were out I started a log. I find that at 11.15 there was a shoal of porpoises in sight. At 12 came the ceremony of heaving the log, and mutual congratulations on the news that we were making ten knots an hour. At 3.20 there was great excitement about a bird which seemed to be following us. It turned out to be a falcon; and shortly after there appeared a turtle-dove which, being more weary, actually came on board and perched on one of the boats, prompting the very pertinent query as to what business he had in that galley at some hundred and fifty miles from the nearest land. Then were seen some flying fish, which are entered in the log as glittering like 'a handful of new sixpences.' This, although a rude and clumsy comparison, does, I am bound to say, convey some idea of the way in which a shoal of flying fish shoots out of a wave, sparkling in the sun for a moment like small silver, and dropping

into the sea again, as if Neptune in a waggish mood was flinging the change of half a sovereign to the ragged little Tritons turning 'cartwheels' before his chariot. The next event seems to have been the appearance of a steamer going westward. Disputes as to whether she was a P. and O. boat, or merely a Levant trader. Captain appealed to, but unwilling to commit himself. Steward on deck to say dinner is ready. Debate adjourned. After this the log is blank, from which I infer that for the rest of the evening the faculty of observation was dormant, and the mere senses had it all their own way. One thing that conduces very much to this indolence is the great comfort of these steamers. Anyone who from experience of our own packets doubts the possibility of feeding people properly at sea, ought to make a voyage in one of the vessels of the Messageries Impériales. Here on board the *Chellif*, for instance, we had a *table-d'hôte* as good as that of the Hôtel de Flandre.

I must confess that when I went up on the morning of the third day to take my first look at Africa, I was much disappointed. I do not suppose I expected exactly to see a lion *couchant* on a rock by the shore, or a troop of elephants coming down to bathe, or a grove of palm-trees waving in the morning breeze, or a Mandingo war-dance in progress on the strand. But it was a little provoking to find that, as far as scenery of a novel cast or suggestive of another con-

tinent was concerned, I might just as well have been steaming up the Firth of Forth. A chilling, drizzling rain was falling, through which there showed hazily in the distance a black rocky coast which looked neither savage, nor wild, nor imposing, but simply cold and commonplace. Right ahead was a ridge of rocks, on which stood a few dejected cormorants and cranes, and a pale thin lighthouse looming through the mist like a ghost that did not go home till morning. Round this, I was told, lay Stora, off which we were to anchor; and Philippeville, where there is as yet no harbour, was that little white patch close by the shore to the left. Presently we rounded the point; the waste pipe began to bellow 'Here we are,' in its usual manner, and a fleet of piratical barks put off from the shore and savagely demanded our persons and portmanteaus. I remember in particular one ruffian who was a judge of costume, and singled me out as his victim with shouts of 'Hi, Inglisman! barca!' Nature has dealt hardly by this part of the coast. At Philippeville, where there is room for a town, there is no place for a harbour; at Stora, where there is a place for a harbour, there is no room for a town. Stora is, in fact, nothing more than a little group of houses wedged in between the sea and the cliff, in a position corresponding to that of the third man in a Hansom, and travellers always go on to Philippeville, towards which town the pirates presently carried us off in triumph. At the moment of casting

off all connection with Europe, as represented by the steamer, as if by magic (and, being in such matters superstitious, I hailed it as a good omen) the aspect of affairs became completely changed. The rain ceased, the mist peeled off the hill-sides, a bright warm flood of sunshine brought out a thousand tints, lights and shadows on sea and shore, where everything had been heavy leaden grey, or greenish brown, a minute before; and there upon the beach ahead of us were to be seen certain moving white objects, which, examined with the telescope, proved to be something like the real thing—something that showed we had at last got clear of Europe—real, bonâ fide Arabs, the old familiar figures of that old Bible story-book of childhood which has left more pictures behind it than many a work of greater ability since perused.

CHAPTER II

'CONSTANTINA'

PHILIPPEVILLE is a thoroughly French townlet—it cannot be called a town, and it certainly is not a village—of the Algerian type; consisting of a main street and parallels, intersected at regular intervals by cross streets; built of two-storied white houses; abounding in cafés and billiards; showing a fair sprinkling of shops; and containing one or two reasonably comfortable hotels:—the whole lying within a girdle of wall which at present is certainly a very easy fit, and has left the slim young settlement plenty of room for growing. It is, in fact, a good specimen of colony-planting as managed under the French hothouse system. I had, by the way, shortly after landing, two curious illustrations of the effects of French colonisation. In the main street, in front of a café, was an African gentleman of grave and venerable appearance, and evidently a person of quality, seated on an unbelieving chair, with his jolly fat legs upon another, and, in the face of noon, carrying on a palpable and undisguised flirtation with the comely proprietress of the establishment. Again, in sallying forth to bathe, I encountered

an Arab staggering home to the town as drunk as if he had been a Christian of the most unimpeachable orthodoxy, and hiccuping with as much earnestness as if it was a practice enjoined by the Koran. He had lost one of his slippers; his great solemn black eyes stared hazily from under the hood of his bernous, which was all awry; in short, he looked a woeful page in the history of civilisation; and as he passed he made an observation which I cannot reproduce, not being familiar with Arabic, but which I feel sure was to the effect that he was 'all right.' To do them justice, the Arabs, though religious scruples prevent them from adopting the European custom of labour, are not at all bigoted on many other points. I have even seen a poor fellow painfully tutoring his palate to the taste of absinthe, and holding his nose while the abominable beverage went down his throat. Thus, even still, civilisation has its martyrs.

Between Philippeville and Stora I found the dearest, cosiest little nook that ever delighted the heart of a bather. I had exhausted the novelties of Philippeville. I was booked for the night diligence for Constantina; I was, in fact, fairly in for Afric and its golden joys: here was my last chance of a real swim for weeks to come, and, moreover, the heat had driven me nearly rabid. Under these circumstances, I turned off the road that connects the above-named places, and scrambled down to the sea through a thicket where

representatives of all the vegetable life of North Africa seemed to have met to warn me off the continent. There were prickly pears with their great fat thumbs of leaves thrust in every direction, aloes in compact tufts of rigid green spears, dwarf palms, great fan-like grasses, all mixed up in a tangle as if the great conservatory at Kew had turned out and settled here for the bathing season. Below this there lay a platform of rock, shaded from the sun by the overhanging cliff, and running down to a little creek where the lazy sea rose and fell with a kind of sleepy pulsation. It was just one of those spots which will insist on coming back to the memory on sweltering July days, when you inhale superheated dust, and the trees in all the squares look wan, and poor baked London gasps for air with all its windows. Many a time afterwards on the bare brown plains of the Sahara did I think with tender regret of the look of that pool, with the sunlight tracing golden patterns upon its carpet of soft sand, and the pink polyps winking drowsily on the rocks, and queer slim fishes gliding in and out of the miniature groves of seaweed; of that plunge in, and the feel of that necklace of cold water, as I struck out in the direction of Europe.

I did not see much of the scenery between Philippeville and Constantina. During the summer and autumn months, the diligences in Algeria, on account of the heat, seldom run by day, if there is a road

sufficiently good to make night travelling practicable. I do not believe, however, the loss was very great, for, from the glimpses I got between naps during the night, we seemed to be always travelling over bare round hills, all exactly alike, and without tree, bush, or rock to break the monotony of their outline. Once, indeed, I did see something which, the diligence notwithstanding, was suggestive of African travel. Waking up from a doze on one occasion, with the usual confusion of idea as to where I was, what I was about, what everything meant, the first thing my eyes lighted upon, as I looked dreamily out of the window, was a drove of camels quite unconnected with any caravan or wild-beast show, demanding no sixpence of me for looking at them, but simply on the high road in pursuit of their ordinary calling, and, at that particular moment, reposing, with their long legs tucked under them, and their gaunt necks and uncouth heads sticking up like pollard trees in the moonlight. Three or four hours after this one of my fellow-travellers said, '*Voilà Constantine!*' and I saw a huge wall of rock crowned with white buildings, standing up before us, looking in the grey morning light, what it is in fact, the spectre of a departed stronghold. By many zigzags the diligence crawled up a hill, then crossed an esplanade, rattled under an archway, and we were inside the ancient capital of Numidia.

As far as situation goes, Constantina is probably the most striking city in the world. It lies on the top of a mighty block of limestone, utterly inaccessible on three sides, and on the fourth connected with the neighbouring hills by the narrow isthmus along which our diligence approached it. It owes this position—indeed, for that matter, its very existence—to the exertions of one of the feeblest-looking little streams that ever ran, the Wed Rummel by name. On its way to the sea from the distant Atlas mountains, and after having got over half its journey with great ease, the Wed Rummel found itself in a difficulty from not having carefully studied the lie of the country. There were hills in front and to the left, and on the right there rose a tall barrier of limestone rock. Rivers of less noble origin would have probably succumbed under these circumstances, would have sulked and made a marsh, or temporised and formed a lake. But a stream born in the forests of the mighty Atlas, at whose source the old lions lapped, and on whose banks the young lions gambolled, was not to be coerced in that way; so it went determinedly at the rock and cleft a passage through it. On it went for some hundreds of yards, cutting a dark deep chasm into which the sun never shines, until at length, finding it had gone quite far enough, it turned sharp to the north, and tunnelling its way out through the hard heart of the mountain, made three or four

cascades in triumph, and sped away over the plain to the Mediterranean. It is on the plateau thus cut off from the hill-side by a natural moat that the city of Constantina stands: a grim looking old city while slings and arrows lasted, but in these days of rifled cannon about as formidable and invulnerable as the Lord Mayor's man in armour.

No town in French Africa has been less Frenchified than Constantina. In the upper part, it is true, there are great ranges of barracks and some new streets, of course several cafés, and two or three very good hotels; but in the lower, were it not for the appearance of an occasional Zouave or *commis voyageur*, you might fancy the Bey was still reigning in the Casbah. It is a maze of narrow streets, meandering as chance may direct, with true Moslem fatalism; in some places streets of shops like large rabbit-hutches, where Ali or Mohammed sits cross-legged, stitching at shoes or saddle-covers, or piously telling his beads, while he waits for a customer; in others, streets of the uncommercial class, with white windowless houses that lean forward till they nearly meet overhead. Woe betide the nervous Christian that stops to examine the architecture in one of those thoroughfares, or the bulky Christian who penetrates them under any pretext! As they are about four feet wide, and as a moderate donkey carrying two sacks and an Arab sitting astride of them will measure across at least three and a half, the danger

can be estimated, when it is understood that donkeys so laden represent the cabs, the omnibuses, and the Pick-

STREET IN CONSTANTINA.

ford's vans of the streets of Constantina. The Mahomedan does not make any irrelevant observation like 'Now

then, stoopid!' If very considerate, he will perhaps say 'Balek,' as he bears down upon you. But in general he follows his destiny in silence, and if you are swept away before him or jammed breathless against the wall, it is the will of Allah: why should he impiously struggle against it? In fact, not to see the Christian except for some very sufficient reason—to ignore his presence unless forced to recognise it—seems to be a matter of principle with the Arab of the town, who in this and in many other respects is a totally different being from the Arab of the country. I was very glad one day to detect a trace of ordinary human weakness in a fine grave old sheikh, who passed by with an expression of the most elevated incuriosity as I was making a rough sketch of some quaint bit of street architecture, but whom I caught a minute after peeping over my shoulder with an expression of face distinctly inquisitive. Poor old fellow! he looked dreadfully ashamed at being found out, and made an utterly transparent attempt at searching for some particular house in the street. Another case of the same sort I might make something of if I had a talent for romantic fiction. This time it was one of those bales of linen, with two black eyes at the top, that represent a Moorish woman, who took an interest in my proceedings. If I could only have represented her as young and lovely, escaped from the harem of some cruel and elderly Moor, and with large tearful eye imploring the sympathy of the

Christian, what a valuable incident it would have been, and how well 'Fathma the Victim' would have read at the top of this page! But truth compels me to say that there was nothing in the lady's expression or appearance to warrant any pleasant theory of this kind. In her 'soft black eye' I could discover no particular expression save one of ordinary dull curiosity. I have a shrewd suspicion she was at least middle-aged, and I know that her nose, the only feature I can give an opinion on, showed through the muslin bandage of her face very like a small pudding in a bag ready for boiling.

In Constantina the influence of the living dog is too powerful for the memory of the dead lion. Shadowy figures like Masinissa, Jugurtha, and Juba, have no chance against gaunt realities of Arabs stalking solemnly about in dingy bernouses, or meditating cross-legged in the coffee-shops. You may try to get up a little enthusiasm about a city that was old two thousand years ago, but it soon evaporates on a stroll through those sinister-looking alleys, full of dark entries and grated air-holes, and iron-shod doors. There is nothing suggestive of stately old heathendom; everything has a dogged Moslem flavour. Do what you may, it is not of Cirta the ancient or of Constantina the magnificent you think, but of the K'sentina of the Arabs, dreaded by the tribes of the plain as the hawk on the cliff is dreaded by the partridges cowering below in the stubble. You can go back no further than the frantic

times of the Beys, and get up no nobler pictures than of massacred Christians, tortured Jews, murders done in the Casbah, and janizaries with dripping yataghans proceeding to elect a new ruler.

Yielding to this feeling, and perhaps also having a natural taste for the pastime, I spent my days at Constantina in the pursuit which is sometimes called mooning, instead of in moralising, or copying inscriptions, or doing antiquities. Having a gift for indirect routes, I soon discovered a way of getting from the Hôtel des Colonies to the opposite corner of the city, without once touching upon French civilisation during the passage; and from steadily working it became, I fancy, rather well known along the line. In one instance, that of a fine old cobbler, whose appearance, shop, and belongings were specially attractive, I progressed as far as a kind of mutual salutation, which perhaps might have ripened into a speaking acquaintance had we been able to understand one another. The African small tradesman is a gregarious animal. Apparently, 'desirable business premises, in a rapidly improving neighbourhood,' are not so much sought after by him as by his London brother. He prefers to open a shop in the same row with his fellows; not, however, for the sake of sociability, but, I am inclined to think, because it leads to bargaining, which is not only essential to business, but, to the Arab mind, rises to the dignity of a sport.

The system, I take it, works somewhat in this fashion. The vendor asks, let us say, three times its value (a moderate estimate) for the article he has on sale. The intending purchaser beats him down slowly to two and a half, and then—tries the next shop. Vendor No. 2, having heard every word of what has passed, begins by asking two and a half, and lets himself be beaten down—with difficulty, of course—to two. This is a sore temptation; but perhaps the process is carried on even a step further in the shop of No. 3. At any rate, it is obvious that the chances of a profitable sale being ultimately effected are multiplied, and the pastime of bargaining protracted, and, as it were, spread over a larger surface. My route lay through an arcade of shops: first, drapers' shops, just like the one in which that forward young counter-jumper of Bagdad bit a piece out of Amine's cheek; open cells raised a yard above the ground, and hung inside with haïks and bernouses, scarfs and girdles of many colours, and festoons of handkerchiefs not altogether free from the suspicion of a Manchester origin. Then came a cluster of shoemakers and workers in leather, generally displaying samples of the native chaussure, from the long red or yellow boot of the cavalier, and the sabat and boat-like shoe of the pedestrian, to my lady's richly-embroidered slipper, looking more like a glorified watch-pocket than a covering for the human foot. Then there was the quarter of the smiths, where the manufacture of the

murderous Arab bits and stirrups went on all day with much clinking of hammers and smell of burning charcoal, with which there mingled pleasantly fragrant whiffs from the neighbouring region of the fruiterers. Then there was a market-place to be crossed, a sight for a painter, with its white groups of marketers and great piles of golden pumpkins, and green water-melons, and scarlet peppers, and purple figs. This was succeeded by a dive into a maze of alleys, with a wedge of sunshine forcing its way between the projecting roofs, and tracing a thin line of light along the pavement, until, passing through a foul old gateway, like a railway arch in reduced circumstances, I came out once more into the hot bright glare of noon at the south-eastern angle of the city, where the old Roman bridge formerly crossed the ravine, and where the French are now at work upon its successor. This spot furnishes an epitome of Constantina and its fortunes. Here is a bit of the old wall of the town, and you can see at a glance that it was no Moorish hand that squared and raised and placed those huge blocks of stone. That is Moorish work, that frowsy beetle-browed gateway that seems to be scowling with all its might at the brisk smug notice-board in front of it, which says, 'It is defended to enter the works.' Looking down on the works and lolling on the parapet are some half-dozen Arabs, filled with lazy wonder at the energy of those wiry men in blouses down below, and with contempt for

that negro who has brought himself to turn a windlass like a mere Christian. By a zigzag path cut out of the rock, you descend here to the bottom of the ravine and mount again to the opposite side, having crossed the Rummel by one of the natural bridges under which it burrows its way out to the plain. At this point a scene breaks upon you which, of itself, is almost worth your journey of a thousand and odd miles due south. You are standing on the edge of a precipice something like St. Vincent's Rock at Clifton. But, instead of the rich Leigh woods, you have in front, and distant scarcely a stone's-throw, another precipice crowned with a quaint African city, whose houses so overhang the abyss that you get now and again glimpses of its inner life, and see Mustapha at his devotions, and Mrs. Mustapha at her household duties, and the little Mustaphas playing in the back-yard; and instead of the sunny Avon, and tug-boats grunting up-stream with deeply-laden sugar-traders, you have a sunless chasm in which the cliff-crows caw and wheel, and the swifts rush by in chattering swarms; and far down in the gloom the Wed Rummel may be heard—and seen if you crane judiciously—fighting its way to the Mediterranean.

A more comprehensive view of the city and country may be obtained at the expense of a scramble to the top of the rock (Sidi Merid, I think, by name) which overlooks Constantina on the east. From this point, as from a balloon, the whole city is seen spread out, a

white lozenge-shaped mass, varied by patches of red tile. On the right, overawing the town, overtopping even its tallest minaret, is the barrack, always a prominent feature in French Africa. Close beside it is the spot where, in the time of the Beys, the Constantinans dissolved their marriages by a cheap but effectual form of procedure. There is a precipice there which goes down a sheer seven hundred feet to the plain below, and when the erring wife was brought up to that simple court of divorce, the injured husband got rid of his domestic troubles by literally throwing her over. In the centre of the town is the Grande Place where, every evening at eight o'clock, Civilisation marches to the newest opera airs played by a military band, and is further fostered by billiards and absinthe at the adjacent *café*. The north-western corner is the French quarter, easily distinguished by its tall houses with windows and jalousies and chimneys from the Quartier Indigène, which lies to the south and east. There is no need of blazing sun or parched brown landscape, or vultures wheeling overhead, to tell you it is not a European city you are looking down upon. There is an air of Mussulman quiescence about Constantina: it lies spread out over its platform of rock like an Arab wrapped in his bernous basking in the sun: the only signs of life its streets afford are the movements of occasional white figures, which at this distance look like

maggots creeping in and out of their holes. No bee-hive hum ascends from that compact mass of human dwellings. The only sound that strikes the ear is the clinking of the crowbars of the French workmen at the bridge, or the shouts of the small boy who is driving away the crows from the prickly-pear gardens at the bottom of the ravine. The surrounding landscape is of the same character. Along the banks of the Rummel are one or two little patches of green, but elsewhere there is nothing to be seen except rusty plains and tawny hills, which look as if all vitality had been baked out of them. Far away to the north-west the monotony of the view is broken by the jagged outline of the range which forms the backbone of the Kabyle country, a country with which I hoped to become better acquainted before long. But it was southwards my eyes turned oftenest. There rose the great mass of the Auress, the Grand Atlas, as the French call it. Those blue mountains had a peculiar fascination for me. They seemed to stand there the boundary between the commonplace and the romance of travel. On this side it was still the old historical be-travelled world; but on their southern slopes began the great Unknown: the great mystery of Central Africa. Up to their very feet rolled that vast plain, the birthplace of the marvellous in ancient times, the blank on the map in modern. Among the distant summits I remarked one sharp conical peak, which seemed to overtop the rest. This, a zouave, with whom

I fraternised one day, told me was called the Djebel Tougourt by the Arabs, and the Pic des Cèdres by the French, and was the highest point in French Africa.* As I looked, the old Alpine thirst for mountain climbing, for lofty summits, and widespread panoramas, came back with fresh vigour. In my ignorance of the structure of the Atlas, I fancied that from that peak I should look down on the Sahara, dotted with oases and Arab towns, stretching away to the unbroken horizon of the desert, and I made a vow to stand upon its top before many hours were over. I don't think I said to myself,

> 'And I will see before I die
> The palms and temples of the South—

in practice one does not quote poetry half so often as the writings of travellers would have us believe. But I meant something of the sort, and so paid my hotel bill, and made tracks for Batna.

* My informant was in error here. The highest point of the Atlas east of the Morocco frontier is the Djebel Chellia, near Krenchela; and a subsequent examination made from the same spot with the aid of the map and compass led me to doubt that the peak he pointed out was the Pic des Cèdres after all.

CHAPTER III.

ACROSS THE ATLAS.

THE Atlas is not, as it is generally represented on maps and geography books, a continuous mountain chain like the Pyrenees, stretching across Barbary from the Atlantic to the Gulf of Cabes. It is rather a series of parallel chains running north-east and south-west, and separated from from each other by plains more or less wide. It is, in fact, like a succession of great mountain waves rolling on towards Egypt before a north-wester from the Atlantic. Like their prototypes at sea, these waves vary very much in height. The highest of all is the first, the snow-capped range, which separates Morocco from the desert. The next is the Auress, which extends nearly to the Tunis frontier; and between these two, in position as well as in height, are the Djurdjura, the Amour, and several other minor chains at various distances from the coast, but all running in the same north-easterly, or, more exactly, east-north-easterly direction. It is to this conformation that Algeria owes those broad, rich plains, sheltered from the north and west, which made Numidia the granary of ancient Rome, but now lie basking idly in the sun,

except when, at rare intervals, some Arab has scratched in a sparse crop of barley, or some French 'colon' is making believe to farm, and has built himself a wan house that looks, in the middle of its little patch of greenery, like a poached egg on spinach. Another consequence is that the passage from the Tell, or cultivable country, to the Sahara, has few or none of those features one is accustomed to associate with crossing a mountain range. The traveller is not compelled to climb by slow zigzags up a Simplon or a St. Gothard, in order to get to the south of the Atlas. He ascends by gentle slopes from plateau to plateau, until he finds himself in the heart of the mountains without having encountered anything much steeper than Holborn-hill. A road of this sort—if that can be called a road which differs from the rest of the plain only in being a trifle more dusty, and showing a few more camel and horse tracks—leads from Constantina to Batna, a distance of about seventy miles.

Batna stands just between the watersheds of the desert and the Mediterranean, upon a plateau nearly four thousand feet above the level of the sea, with the heights of the Auress on the south-east and the mountains of the Soultan, among which the Djebel Tougourt rises conspicuously, on the north-west. It only wants houses and inhabitants, to be a considerable town. All the outward and visible signs of a city are there. There is a neat loopholed wall all round it,

pierced with gates for the reception of visitors from every point of the compass. Honest macadamized roads set out in every direction, with the very best intentions, as if they expected some one and wished to meet him becomingly. But, like sister Anne, they cannot see anybody coming, and either stop short, utterly disheartened, or else lose all self-respect, and falling into the company of loose, disorderly mule-paths, wander away over the plain as if they did not care much where they went to, dusty, purposeless, and degraded. There is even a rudimentary park waiting to be developed into a Bois de Boulogne by the wants of a crowded city. Inside the walls it is the same. There is, of course, an enormous barrack. There is a church, and a mosque, and a market-place, and there are a few shops, several cafés, and a great number of streets, where, for the most part, the houses seem to have failed. In fact, Batna, as a town, reminds one forcibly of our London suburban horticulture. There is, as every one who takes his walks abroad knows, in the outskirts of London, a sort of front garden where the soil is a compost of pulverised brick, oyster-shells, and old shoes, and nothing seems to grow freely except a kind of small ready-made birch-broom. It is a sight worth all the sermons on the vanity of human wishes then in course of delivery, to see the proprietor of such a plot, watering-pot in hand, making his Sunday-morning's tour of inspection. You see that he is a man with a soul above

the birch-broom indigenous to the property. There are natty little green stakes which any convolvulus or sweet-pea might be proud to climb, and intensely legible labels erected to the memory of lupines buried in faith. But the sweet-pea refuses to climb; the convolvulus sulks at the foot of its stake, and looks like a cheap salad, and the lupines obstinately sleep on in the grave where that Briton has laid them.

Thus it is with Batna; in spite of all invitations, in spite of streets neatly laid down and named with names full of encouragement, the houses somehow won't come up, or at best sprout irregularly and in patches. From the very beginning there seems to have been a tendency to failure. The very name under which the town was started, failed. The French at first called it New Lambessa, but the title was soon abandoned. Perhaps it was found too expensive, and perhaps the present insolvent appearance of Batna may be referred to this early extravagance.

The novelties of a town of this sort are soon exhausted, and, although it was noon, and a night spent in travelling is not the best preparation for a mountain excursion, I began to cast longing eyes on the summit of the Pic des Cèdres. The landlord at the hotel was very severe upon the absurdity of the plan. It was, he said, two hours across the plain, and three or more from the foot to the top of the peak. I was certain to be belated, and there were 'bad Arabs' about at night.

In effect it was impossible. This seemed to me a kind of challenge; besides, while taking the customary coffee and *petit verre* after breakfast, I had examined the route carefully with the telescope, and had satisfied myself that, with smart walking, little more than an hour would suffice for crossing the plain, and that the ascent of the peak itself ought to be done in two hours and a half. So I ordered dinner for half-past six, an order the landlord received with a 'bien' and a shrug that said, as plainly as if he had been a North Briton, 'He that will to Cupar maun to Cupar,' and started westwards in the lightest marching order for my first mountain ramble in the Grand Atlas. The Pic des Cèdres, as I advanced towards it, reminded me rather of the Niesen on the south side of the Lake of Thun. Though probably quite as high above the sea level, it is perhaps less lordly to look at, owing to the greater elevation of the plateau from which it springs; but in shape and outline there is a resemblance between the two mountains. But the circumstances differ widely. Instead of the snowy masses of the Blumlis Alp and the Altels and the Jungfrau, there is a background of wooded mountains; and instead of the bright blue lake, the foreground is a flat plain of a uniform russet brown. A week or two later, after a little experience of plains further south, I should have regarded that plain as rich, lush, almost verdant, for it was not without a certain sort of vegetation. But as I crossed it, it seemed

to me the most arid, inhospitable tract I had ever travelled over, and to be clothed with an herbage which had been somehow transmuted into cocoa-nut fibre. The very larks—the only living things I could see—had something in them of the general dreariness; they were sad dust-coloured birds, that fluttered away with a melancholy tweet-twee-twee, as if they did not feel themselves competent to sing at heaven's gate, and saw no use in singing on earth under the circumstances. Still, the walk was not without its incidents. There was a dark speck right ahead, which I had been contemplating for some time, and at length made out to be an Arab tent. Here at last I had before me one of the things I was in quest of—'one of the low black tents which I had so long lusted to see,' to use the words of Eothen. It was rather a disappointment to find it exactly the sort of thing I had expected. A plague of all photographers, wandering artists, and observant travellers; their persevering efforts to add to the 'stock of general information' have left nothing strange to us. To travel now-a-days is like reading a novel, the plot of which has been just told you by an officious friend, and you look at Niagara or the Pyramids critically and without the sweet sensation of surprise. This low, striped tent, the first instance I had met with of the most ancient order of domestic architecture now extant, seemed quite a familiar object. I had seen it scores of times in water-colour exhibitions,

in portfolios, in illustrated travels. The two small children squatting in dust like dry frogs were old friends; and even if the gaunt woman who stood shading her eyes as she stared after me had run up and requested me to cross her hand with silver in return for the information that there was a dark lady ardently attached to me, I could not have felt more exactly as if I was passing an utterly unexciting gipsy-camp on Wimbledon Common. Next I became aware of two white dots in the distance, which presently resolved themselves into a couple of horsemen, who, as soon as they caught sight of me, came down upon me at full gallop. They turned out to be an Arab gentleman and his henchman—at least so I presumed, from the difference in their equipment. The gentleman wore a pair of high red boots, garnished with enormous spurs made on the simple principle of the skewer. He bore on his back a prodigiously long flint gun, richly ornamented with strips of tin, and rode a rawboned wiry grey fired on all fours, as Arab horses generally are, the operation being performed as a preventive rather than a cure. The saddle was a huge affair, with a cantle and pommel that rose a good foot above the horse's back, and the head-stall and blinkers—worn for show, not use—were profusely embroidered with tarnished gold twist. He himself had a 'lean and hungry look,' and I cannot describe him as being personally well favoured; but he was clearly of a sociable turn. As he drew up on one

side of me and the henchman on the other, he grunted. As I did not know exactly what to say to him, I grunted too, and we were immediately quite at ease with one another. It is wonderful how rational and pithy a conversation is when it is carried on without the use of words. By the aid of a vigorous pantomime, this Arab gentleman and I enjoyed, if not a feast of reason and flow of soul, at least an agreeable interchange of ideas. He demanded of me where I was going; I replied to the mountain yonder; on which he observed that he was going part of the way, and that we might as well take advantage of one another's company to relieve the monotony of the road. I made signal that he was very kind to telegraph so, and that I had no objection. He then enquired what I was going for, to which I made answer that I wanted to see the mountains and the view generally, and that I had come from Batna for that purpose; upon this he remarked that he too had come from Batna, but that he didn't live there, he lived over there among the mountains. He added that he had no opinion of Batna. I supported him, and gave him to understand that for my part I considered Batna an undesirable place of residence. He then desired to be informed whether my telescope was an instrument of destruction, or, if not, how otherwise—a query easily answered by adjusting it and making him look through it at the henchman, who, finding the conversation slow, had dropped a long way

into the rear. If I had made my very best joke, and he had understood it, he could not have been more flatteringly tickled than he was by the result of this experiment. On the whole, it was not a very wise or witty conversation; but I have heard worse in point of intellectuality at an evening party, and we separated with mutual expressions of esteem (although I declined to present him with my pocket handkerchief, which he vehemently desired to annex): he galloping off across the plain to his mountain home, I taking to the shingle and brushwood on the first slopes of the Pic des Cèdres.

And now I learned my first lesson in African mountaineering. I had crossed the plain at a good pace under a blazing sun, and, to use a mild term, I was thirsty. Fancying that the Atlas was as other mountains, I had made no provision for assuaging thirst beyond taking an india-rubber cup, a dear old friend that had been dipped into many a glacier stream, and had helped to finish many a bottle of red wine on the snow-fields of the Alps. But here were no streams, glacier or otherwise. There was nothing to be seen on any side but dry slabs of limestone, a few junipers, and bushes of an unbibulous kind of brushwood that seemed to have taken a pledge of total abstinence early in life, and to have adhered to it ever since. Time after time I stopped to listen, and try if I could catch that blessed tinkling sound of falling water, so welcome to the ear of the thirsty mountain climber; and I was quite prepared to go miles

out of my way on the slightest encouragement. But not a murmur could I detect in any direction. A more unbroken silence I never heard—for there is a silence so intense that your ear-drum vibrates under it—there was not even the faintest sigh of a breeze among the cedars high up on the mountain-side. It seemed as if the world had not been wound up, and had run down during the night in consequence. After a steady ascent of about an hour, I came suddenly upon an Arab camp planted in the middle of a small open space in the brush. There were two or three tents surrounded by a fortification of loose stones, topped by a formidable fence of thorns; to me a pleasant reminder that I was travelling in a land where wild beasts were not confined in cages, and might be expected to drop in without ceremony any evening. There were some children and half a dozen wolfish-looking dogs basking together inside the works. The former bolted like rabbits into the tents, and the latter immediately declared war against my legs with much barking. The Arab dog, however, has a wholesome fear of stones, and thirst made me indifferent to the chance of such a minor inconvenience as a bite in the calf; so I advanced to the gate of the fortification. The noise brought out the womankind of the camp—the males, I suppose, were from home—an ascending scale of female ugliness, from a young girl of about ten, up to a grim and terrible old matron, evidently the progenitrix of the settlement. I held out

my cup, and, with the most polite and conciliatory signs I could think of, intimated that a little water in it would be esteemed a great favour. It was no use: one and all they shrank back, and stared at me in a startled way. No wonder. Fancy what would be the feelings of the ladies of a genteel family in Gloucester-terrace, if an over-heated Arab were suddenly to appear in their front garden, demanding refreshment on the plea that he was going to the top of Primrose-hill, and you will perceive that a figure in a grey shooting-coat and wideawake—grimy and dusty, burnt, as to face and neck, to the colour of a new brick, and gesticulating wildly—was an apparition sufficiently out of the common to disturb these poor women of the wilderness. Some reflection of this sort, I suppose, made me burst into a laugh at the absurdity of the position. This completely changed the aspect of affairs. The young lady of ten, assuming that there were no reasons for believing me to be a hyæna, very properly concluded from my possessing the gift of laughter, that I was comparatively harmless; and dismissing all other considerations, gave herself up to the enjoyment of the humorous side of the affair and the exquisite comicality of my personal appearance. The thing took, and presently there was a general peal, such as the grey old rocks of the Djebel Tougourt probably never echoed before. The very dogs gave over barking, and, I verily believe, laughed, and even the old grandmamma, though she was not noisy, worked her face

into such a labyrinth of wrinkles, that the tears went astray the moment they rolled out of the corners of her eyes. There was no difficulty about the water question after this, though I could see that the flexible nature of the cup I gave to be filled produced a shock that very nearly occasioned a relapse. It was brought to me filled with a liquid of the colour of weak coffee, and tasting like an extract of old shoes thickened with slate-pencil scrapings, but I thought at the time I had never swallowed anything so delicious. I should like to have a close translation of the story that was told to Paterfamilias when he came back to the tents that evening.

A little above the friendly Arab camp I got another reminder of the latitude. As I was making my way upwards under the shade of the cedars, to which the peak owes its French name—noble trees, to all appearance ancient enough to be the contemporaries of those of Lebanon—I turned aside once, half mechanically, to pick up a very peculiar looking stick I saw lying at a little distance. As I approached, my stick gave a well-defined hiss, and wriggled away down the rocks, an able-bodied snake nearly as thick as my wrist. I do not think that even if I had picked him up, I should have been in the slightest danger. The only venomous creatures in Algeria, I believe, are the scorpion and the small adder, called by the Arabs El Effah, which are found nowhere but in the Sahara. But the incident served to impress the fact that it was in Africa, not in

Europe, I was wandering, and that my friend was part of a system which embraced lions and panthers, on whose account it was as well to give a wide berth to any dense bit of thicket or dark ravine that lay on my route. I was soon clear of the wood, however, and a climb up a steep rocky cone, which formed the final peak, brought me to the top of the Pic des Cèdres. I found that I had made a good guess at the time the excursion would take up; for it was little more than three hours and a half since I had left Batna. The ascent, however, had proved even a simpler affair than I had expected; in fact, except for the heat, it was scarcely as hard work as the ascent of the Breven from Chamouni. Of course, my first look was directed southwards, but I was disappointed of one of the sights for which I had come up. Instead of the Sahara stretching away into the infinity of the desert, I saw nothing but a maze of mountains with heads of bare grey limestone, and sides clothed with dark green forest. Just under my feet, on the north-western side of the peak, lay one of the wildest and most beautiful valleys I have ever seen; but to me its greatest charm was that down at the bottom, contrasting strongly with the dark flaky foliage of the cedars that covered its sides, lay the first piece of honestly green grass that had gladdened my eyes for many a day. But its beauties clearly made no impression on the Arab mind; for the only living creature in it was a meditative old eagle, who sat on the top of a dead cedar, far

below, like a landed proprietor surveying his property, and turning over drainage schemes in his mind. Beyond the opposite wall of the valley I made out the peaks of the Djurdjura, more than a hundred miles away, and nearer, and more to the north-east, the heights above Constantina. East, looking across the plain, was the great mountain wilderness of the Auress, a mass of ridges stretching to the frontier of Tunis. A patch of white, down in the plain below, showed where Batna was; and beyond it, at the very foot of the mountain, was a speck, which the telescope proved to be the great prison of Lambessa. I was not the first, it seemed, that had looked out over this wide-spread view. On the very summit there were the remains of a rude hut, which I afterwards found had been built by the French engineers, when engaged on the Government map of Algeria. Under the wall of this, I lay down and gave myself up to the placid enjoyment of solitude and silence, as long as I dared; and descending rapidly, got into Batna as night was beginning to fall, and the jackals to whine on the skirts of the plain.

From Batna to Lambessa is only six or seven miles, and of course I did not leave without paying a visit to the remains of the old Roman city. As you approach from Batna you see ahead of you, for miles before you reach Lambessa, two structures standing side by side on the plain. One is the Prætorium, the most perfect and beautiful relic of Roman colonisation in North Africa; the

other is a huge spick-and-span, and intensely ugly, white building, dedicated to the French divinity Order. It is the great penitentiary of Lambessa, formerly filled with political prisoners, but now chiefly employed for the conversion of delinquent Arabs, who atone for their offences against the Gallic goddess by breaking stones from sunrise to sunset, under the eye of a sentinel with fixed bayonet. No essay upon the French and Roman system of colonisation could be more eloquent than these two buildings, scarcely a stone's-throw apart. To the north the whole plain is covered with relics of the old city: fragments of columns, capitals, broken arches, remains of aqueducts, are to be seen on every side. Behind the penitentiary is the new Lambessa, consisting chiefly of café-billiards, at one of which, to the astonishment of the proprietor, I took up my quarters. Travellers are rare birds at Lambessa; and when they do come, it is to pass a flying visit to the ruins, and return to Batna in the evening. But my object was not purely antiquarian. I wanted to make a few excursions into the Auress, for the glimpse I had caught from the Pic des Cèdres of that wild region had filled me with curiosity. Unfortunately, I allowed that curiosity to be satisfied with one or two rambles through its oak forests and along its ridges. I say unfortunately, because I was afterwards told that had I persevered, and penetrated into the heart of the mountains, I should have found some of the grandest and richest

scenery in the Atlas, and made the acquaintance of the most interesting people of North Africa. The Auress is inhabited by a race which has always been a puzzle to ethnologists. They speak a Kabyle dialect, and, like the Kabyles, they live in villages of stone houses, surrounded by well-cultivated gardens, planted with figs, pomegranates, olives, and vines.

Unless the accounts I heard were over-coloured, some of the glens of the Auress must be African Edens in luxuriance and beauty; but even ages ago their richness seems to have been known far away; for was not the garden of the Hesperides in a valley of Mount Atlas? Another less enviable reputation which it bore in ancient times it still sustains. It is the district west of the river Triton, which Herodotus describes as being, above all the rest of Libya, woody and infested by wild beasts; and it still is, more than other parts of the Atlas, the haunt of the lion and the panther. It is the preserve out of which Jules Gérard made his best bags. I do not believe that he hunted much in the Auress itself, but he certainly killed several of its lions at Krenchela and in the valley of Ourten, to the east of Lambessa. There is, however, at Batna, even a greater than Gérard, a hunter, who is probably the only one who ever wrestled with a wounded lion and came alive out of the struggle. As the story was told me, he saved himself from the jaws of the brute by grasping the mane, and so holding back the head by main force, until

his companion ran up and pistolled the animal. But the traveller in these mountains will be disappointed, or delighted, as the case may be, to find that the chances of a lion in his path are very slight. They are very much more scarce than we here imagine. It must be recollected that each lion requires a large tract of country for his hunting-ground, so that they are perforce widely scattered, and, furthermore, that the lion is strictly a nocturnal animal, and only on rare occasions leaves his lair before sunset. I once bid up to ten francs for a bonâ-fide lion's roar; but the Arab guide to whom I made the offer did not think it worth while to make even an attempt at earning the money, saying that we might go out and sit on the mountain-side every night for a month without hearing anything.* It is true, I may have been nearer him than I thought once or twice; for I remember I heard that the night after I left Lambessa, a lion had killed a cow near the head of a valley I had been in the day before. But they do not think much of a lion in Algeria. I asked a wood-cutter who spent the greater part of his life up in the forest, if he ever saw lions there, and he answered, 'Quelquefois, monsieur,' just as if he was speaking of rabbits; and all parties seemed to be agreed, that except when he is attacked or wounded, a lion never thinks it worth

* In subsequent rambles, however, I succeeded in satisfying my curiosity on this head, as well as about the scenery and inhabitants of the Auress.

while to molest a man. Of the panther, on the other hand, some sportsmen have a great horror. They say he has a vicious trick of sneaking along parallel to your path, silent and unseen, in the brushwood, until he gets an opportunity for a spring. He is, however, even rarer than the lion. I got many a warning against 'ces cochons les Arabes,' and one or two about panthers; but nobody ever seemed to think lions a danger worth giving a stranger a hint about. Of course I always carried arms on these mountain rambles; but in Algeria one carries a gun much as one carries an umbrella in London. Irrespective of any use for it, there is an undefined air of respectability about the thing; and, not to speak of loose-lived Arabs, there is always the *chance* of a shot at a boar in these mountains.

Thanks to French civilisation, you cross the Atlas as Hannibal did the Alps, according to the dear old school joke, on the top of a diligence. Not one of the ordinary French diligences, weighing three or four tons, and as big as a house, but a lithe, compact, wiry little vehicle, made chiefly of sheet-iron. On such a one I started at three o'clock one morning for Biskara, in the Sahara. I soon found out why it was built in this peculiar way. A journey over the plains by which one descends to the level of the Sahara, has all the danger, without the excitement, of a fox-hunt. For a time, as long as you are on the upper plateaus, it is all plain sailing. But soon you get into a region of water-

courses, or rather of beds of watercourses. There is no road; nothing but a series of vague tracks; and the diligence takes the country, to employ the Galwagian dialect of Charles Lever, 'as God made it.' The driver braces himself firmly in his seat, gets his vehicle together, and puts it at a gully as if no such things as springs or wheels entered into its composition. Sometimes the fence is too stiff to be cleared in this way, and then you jog quietly along by the side of it until the coachman sees a likely spot, on which he backs the diligence, experienced passengers taking that opportunity to get a firm hold of something, and then rushes it at the ditch with furious shouts of 'youp' and 'ee-ee' to the horses. Accidents of course sometimes happen, but I only heard of one serious one, in which the sufferer was '*un Anglais*'—as the driver said, warningly—who went to sleep while the diligence was having a smart burst over a difficult bit of country. After a morning of this sort of travelling we began to descend the southern slopes of the Atlas. The mountains which bounded the plains became more bare and precipitous in character; the watercourses became more steep and decided; and at last we got into what seemed to be a *cul de sac.* On the right was a long grey mountain range rising up from the plain like a wall; in front was a mass of mountains, apparently too much for even an Algerian diligence; on the left was a barrier of rocks stretching away as far as the eye could see. Where we were to

get out it was impossible to see; but the driver said it was only El Kantra, and that we should have breakfast in half an hour. Presently, a gap showed in the wall of rock that hemmed us in on the left, and the road—if it could be called a road—immediately made for it. A more wonderful spot than this El Kantra it would be hard to find. A little stream, like the Rummel at Constantina, seems to have gone at the rocks in despair, and burst its way out into the Sahara. Through this gate the Romans marched southward, and we, in our humble way, followed them, taking advantage of that work of theirs which has given to the spot its Arab name of 'The Bridge.' A warm wind that spoke of the desert met us as we entered the gap, and through the cleft, framed in precipitous rocks eight hundred feet high, the first oasis of the Sahara burst into view. The look of the place made me waver in my intention of going on to Biskara: the look of the Caravanserai decided me. I let the diligence proceed without me, and that night smoked my pipe under the palm-trees, and felt I was at last in Africa as it ought to be.

CHAPTER IV.

EL KANTRA.

WHEN Mr. Tristram, the enterprising explorer of the Great Sahara, describes El Kantra as a 'magnificent semi-alpine, semi-tropical scene,'* he does no more than justice to its grandeur and beauty; at the same time he hits off the precise phrase to give the best idea of the features of this wonderful spot. Up above the palm-trees of the oasis, screening them from the north and west, rises a giant wall of limestone nearly eight hundred feet high, and over this tower the distant heights of the Djebel Mitlili. Right and left this wall runs for miles, a line of grey precipices without a break, except the deeply-cut jagged notch where the Wed el Kantra, the 'Stream of the Bridge,' like a youth impatient of home restraint, bursts its way through the barrier, and sets out to see the world and find a sandy grave in the thirsty plains of the Sahara. At his first entrance into life the palms cluster round him like fair Dalilahs, bending their graceful heads over him, dipping their long tresses in his waters, as he winds among them,

* *The Great Sahara: Wanderings South of the Atlas Mountains.* By H. B. Tristram.

whispering softly to him, shading him tenderly from the noonday sun, and then, as soon as they have had all they want of him, they leave him to wander alone over the barren plain, and to die of premature absorption in a bibulous soil. From the high bank behind the Caravanserai, you look out over a sea of dark glossy green, flecked with the lighter tints of the fig and pomegranate, and, in autumn, with gleams of gold from the clusters of ripe dates that hang beneath the feathery branches. Through long colonnades of slender stems, you catch glimpses of a tangled wilderness of Arab gardens strewed with melons, gourds, pumpkins, and cucumbers; and here and there, peering through the plumy tops of the palm-trees, rise the whitewashed domes of the marabouts, and the square brown watch-towers of the hidden town. Down through the middle of this fair garden flows the Wed el Kantra, lolling lazily upon its bed, stretching itself out into scores of rivulets, taking every opportunity of loitering on its way, as if loath to leave those pleasant shades. Once it was my fortune to see it in a different mood. All day long the heat had been excessive, even for the Sahara. What little breeze there was, came like a blast fresh from a finishing academy of furnaces, and a hot yellow haze hung overhead, as if the sky was charged with curry-powder. I had strolled out into the plain to a spot where I had seen some gazelles a day or two before, but there was something in the air that made me indif-

ferent to the chance of sport at the certain cost of exertion. I do not think I should have had energy enough to attempt a stalk if a gazelle had appeared within two hundred yards of me. I tried a bath in a favourite pool in the river, but the water was almost tepid. There was nothing for it but to turn in and lie down. The caravanserai generally had yielded to the influences of the day. The 'humans,' as American writers call them, had all gone to sleep; the horses and mules had lost their appetites, and stood meditating over their fodder with drooping heads and pendulous ears; the cocks and hens, persuaded that some great tribulation was coming on the earth, had suddenly grown serious, and were preparing themselves for another world in one of the sheds; the only creature that gave any signs of animation was a fatuous old goat, tethered in the corner of the yard, who evidently thought that the temperature was meant as a personal affront to him, and stamped, and shook his head, and bleated petulantly, as if he could not and would not stand it. As I lay on my bed reading for about the tenth time how d'Artagnan and the Trois Mousquetaires rode out of Paris, there came from outside a cry of 'Ai, ai,' followed by a low roaring sound quite indescribable. There was a general turn out to the bank behind the Caravanserai, where we found half the population of El Kantra already assembled. It was a wonderful scene that met our eyes. In our own immediate neighbourhood all

was as before, dry, hot, and glaring; but high up on the distant mountain-tops there was wild work going on. All along the ridges of the Mitlili and over the Auress, great masses of indigo-coloured clouds were rolling about furiously, darting out streams of steel-blue lightning, and pouring down curtains of rain that chased each other along the sides of the ravines. But it was not the distant thunderstorm that had produced the panic; it was the river. At our feet it flowed along in its usual feeble, placid way; but up towards the bridge there was what seemed to be a dark wall stretching across from bank to bank, and bearing down on us with a low sullen roar. On it came, a huge wave crowned with muddy foam, and followed by a mad jumble of uprooted trees, bushes, beams of timber, pieces of mud-wall, among which spun and whirled pumpkins and melons, and quite a marketful of garden produce; and as it passed, the palm-trees, shaken by some current of air, bowed their heads, as if deprecating its anger. A pair of unlucky mules who had gone down into the bed of the river for shade and refreshment, lost all presence of mind when the flood came roaring at them round a corner of the bank. They made frantic efforts to get out of its way; but it sprang on them, and rolled them over, and hurried them away at a rate of ten miles an hour. Every minute fresh news came in—that Ali ben Something's goat had been drowned—that Omar ben Something Else had lost his donkey—that two young men

had been carried off; and if these things happened at El Kantra, it was hard to say what would not happen at Biskara, which place, allowance being made for the windings of the river, the flood would probably reach about midnight. Biskara, we afterwards learned, escaped with very trifling damage, and the story about the two young men turned out to be false. This of course was very pleasant to hear; but I think, at the same time, it produced a feeling of disappointment in the flood, and made us regard it very much as if it had been an impostor who got a great deal of sincere respect out of us on false pretences.

The Algerian Caravanserai is a thing *sui generis*, and that at El Kantra is a good specimen. It is simply a large quadrangle, with small rooms opening on to it on one or two sides, which serve for the *salle à manger*, and sleeping-rooms of the guests and lodgings of the 'gardien.' The other sides are taken up with sheds for horses and mules, and for storing fuel and fodder. It is built not merely to serve as a refuge for travellers in time of peace, but also as a fort, where in time of war a few men could easily hold out as long as supplies lasted, against an enemy unprovided with artillery. All the windows look on to the court. The only entrance is through an archway, closed by a substantial gate. The walls are about twelve feet high, and very thick, with projecting towers at two opposite angles, so as to command all four sides.

They are pierced with loopholes all round; and as you lie in bed, it is a great comfort to think that in case of an attack you might keep up a galling fire upon the enemy with perfect impunity from the top of the dressing-table.

Being a Government institution, it is as a general rule kept scrupulously clean, and board and lodging are paid for according to a fixed tariff. There is perhaps a monotony in the diet. Man is not strictly a gallinivorous animal, and has a tendency to tire of perpetual poultry. But, on the whole, caravanserai quarters are positively luxurious to a traveller at all accustomed to roughing it, and by far the most comfortable he will find in Algeria, except in such places as Algiers and Bona, where there are hotels as good as any in Europe. I little thought, when reading Mr. Tristram's delightful book a year or two before, that the 'stout old Breton soldier and his bustling matron,' whom he mentions as receiving him at El Kantra, were to become to me esteemed friends, of whose hospitalities I shall always have a grateful recollection. To Madame Fouquet I owe more than this; for I am conscious of having done her gross injustice at first. When I first saw her, she had the diligence breakfast on her mind, the passengers were hungry and clamorous, and, in a word, Madame Fouquet was 'put out,' and exhibited that briskness of manner which is considered to be a characteristic of the 'tartar.' It is

always a prudent precaution, in home as well as foreign travel, to conciliate the womankind and the dogs the first thing on coming into a strange house. Omit this, and it is impossible for you to feel thoroughly at home afterwards. I therefore proceeded after breakfast to humble myself in Madame Fouquet's sight, to explain to her that I was not, as those others, a seeker after unattainable luxuries, a grumbler at present comforts, but in all things submissive to her authority, and ready to accept thankfully any benefits it might be her pleasure to bestow. But it was quite unnecessary: the source of irritation had been removed, and Madame Fouquet appeared the kind, good-humoured soul nature had made, and diligence breakfasts could only temporarily ruffle. This worthy couple, together with the garçon of the establishment, constitute the whole European population, which is to the *indigène* in the proportion of one to a thousand. But by the simple force of *bonhomie*, M. Fouquet has obtained an influence over the Arabs of El Kantra greater than if he was a colonel commandant with a garrison of five hundred men. Besides being a general referee and counsellor, he is a kind of sheik without a portfolio, cadi without office, and hakim in ordinary to the town. The latter office seemed to be a sufficiently troublesome one. Ophthalmia is very prevalent at El Kantra, as it is in most towns of the Sahara, and every evening towards sundown a troop of Arabs, chiefly

women and children, came up to the gate of the Caravanserai, where M. Fouquet sat waiting for them, with a strip of carpet and a bottle of sulphate of zinc. It was a group worthy of Carl Haag: the Arab women, lean, and brown, and weird-looking, with their kohl-stained eyelids and henna-tipped fingers, and profusion of uncouth, tawdry ornaments; the poor little patients squatting in rows, bandaged as to the eyes, as if for a dreary game of blindman's buff, and displaying all that redundancy of stomach and attenuation of limb for which Arab childhood is remarkable; and in the middle, the jolly, rosy face and burly figure of the doctor. One by one the patients lay down on the carpet, and while M. Fouquet dropped the zinc solution into the eye, the women, with a heroic disregard of the pain they did not feel themselves, and no doubt fancying that the greater the suffering the greater the chance of cure, rubbed the eyelids together vigorously, amid the yells and struggles of the little wretch under operation. There was one little chap who made a great impression on me. As far as I could see his face, it had a most comic expression, and he sat waiting for his turn, cross-legged, bolt upright, with his hands on his knees, more like a Hindoo idol than I had thought it possible for a human being to look. When his turn came, instead of being dragged like the others, he skipped nimbly to the carpet and lay down, clenching his little fists and locking his toes together, determined not to shout, come what might.

While the biting lotion ran all over his poor raw, inflamed eyelids, and the harridan who had him in charge chafed them, he made no sign beyond a twitching of the mouth and a working of the toes; and when all was over, like the gallant Tom Sayers, he was carried to his corner smiling. I know it is a weakness, and that it is wrong, to make untutored virtue an object for pecuniary reward; but I warmed to that quaint and plucky small boy, and not having any other means of expressing my affection for him, I slipped certain coins into his hand when nobody was looking. At first, he clearly did not know what to make of them; but presently a suspicion of the truth flashed across him. As his eyes could give him no help, he furtively tasted and smelt the money, looking humiliatingly like a monkey while he did so; and then, satisfied with the genuineness of the donation, he turned in what he supposed to be the direction of the donor, and grinned a grin that showed a mouthful of ivory a chimneysweep might have been proud of. The act was perhaps unphilosophical, and contrary to the true principles of political economy, but I hope it did something towards mitigating the smart of the sulphate of zinc.

The town of El Kantra is a collection of huts built of sun-dried brick, and distributed in clusters over the upper part of the oasis. They are of the regular Saharan type, with flat roofs of palm-stems plastered over with mud, and little windows, or rather air-holes, of

fantastic patterns. The first room is generally a kind of vestibule, with mud benches round it, on which the master of the house carries on his trade, whatever it may be; and beyond this, you catch glimpses of an open court, and of one or two other rooms, where the women sit weaving haiks or grinding corn for to-morrow's kouskous. They, as far as I could see, constitute the working classes of El Kantra. The men occasionally do a little light gardening, and some few of them are smiths and shoemakers; but the branch of industry which flourishes most in the city is lying at full length on the benches above-mentioned and meditating. The capacity an Arab has for this occupation is astonishing. He never seems to tire of it, never demands any relaxation. He has a way, too, of following the calling in odd and, for the rest of the world, inconvenient situations, such as the middle of a road or across a doorway. I had a narrow escape myself one dark night coming out of a native *café*, the threshold of which was blocked up by an obstruction of this sort. A French gentleman who was following me was less lucky, for he fell over the body of the musing Mahomedan, and pitched on his head into a cesspool that lay conveniently in front of the door, in the depths of which he was heard consigning the 'pigs of Arabs' to eternal punishment.

Of the public buildings of El Kantra I cannot say much. They consist of tall square watch-towers, for the

protection of the palm-gardens in the date season, which at a distance are not unpicturesque, and of those structures, which the French persist in calling marabouts, edifices which bear about the same relation to the regular mosques that a low-church chapel does to a parish church.* There is this difference, that in the case of the marabout, the attraction is not a living popular preacher, but the fame of some deceased leader of the evangelical party among the Moslems, who has in some way invested the building with an odour of sanctity: an odour which, after some slight experience, I am compelled to describe as musty. About well-to-do marabouts there is always a tendency to commit excesses in whitewash, and an assumption of cheerful piety which reminds one rather of the Clapham School of Architecture; but the poor ones have a look of shabby Methodism, and give one the idea of Dissenting dirt-pies.

As a guide was absolutely necessary for the sort of excursion I contemplated making, I was glad to get one on the recommendation of one of the sheikhs of the town, and in this way made the acquaintance of my excellent friend Amar ben Moussa. Unlike his race generally, who are for the most part tall and spare, and sinewy rather than muscular, he was somewhat under the middle height, with brawny shoulders, powerful arms,

* In Arabic the building is called 'Kubbah;' 'Marabout,' is simply the title of the holy man in whose honour it was erected.

and the best pair of legs I ever saw under an Arab, who, as a general rule, is miserably spindle-shanked, and, instead of a calf, has a kind of swelling like a small cocoa-nut a little below the back of his knee. His chief recommendations were that he was the greatest hunter and best mountaineer in the place, and also that he spoke a little French. That he had another I did not know till afterwards, when a chance comer to El Kantra hinted mysteriously something about his having been in trouble with the authorities, and having undergone certain terms of *travaux forcés* in consequence of an uncontrollable proclivity towards homicide. What amount of truth there may have been in the story I cannot say, and I must admit it was so far confirmed that Amar himself had spoken frequently of having '*travaillé bezzef*'—worked a great deal—at Lambessa. But at the time I heard it, Amar and I had become fast friends. We had eaten out of the same wallet and drunk out of the same cup. We had climbed many a mountain side, enjoyed many a siesta under the shade of the rocks, looked on many a wild and beautiful scene together; in short, there existed between us a strong mountaineering fellowship not easily to be broken down, and I don't think it would have shaken my feeling of confidence in the worthy fellow if he had been proved to have been steeped in blood up to the elbows. In the case of an Arab, an infirmity of this sort argues nothing against the general qualities of the man. It is perhaps a

thing to be deplored, as a slight tendency to drink might be in the case of a European; but it does not prevent him from being a most estimable character generally; and if he serves you in any capacity, all you have to do is to take care, for your own sake as well as for his, not to tempt him to err. I think even the French, with all their anxiety to engraft European ideas on the Arab mind, are convinced of this, and visit all offences of this sort, short of actual deliberate murder, with as light sentences as are consistent with the preservation of order. When I think of Amar's broad good-humoured face, I feel that if he was a homicide—and I must say I can't bring myself to believe it—it was simply the effect of early bad example, and of coming of a race that sets a low value on human life, not because of any natural bias in the man.*

The expedition on which I had set my heart was an exploration of the Djebel Mitlili, the great mountain of the El Kantra district, which, from the glimpse I had got of it, seemed to promise well for wild scenery. The idea, however, met with strong opposition from Amar. He represented the difficulties as enormous, and the precipices to be scaled as something terrific. He even took me down into the town, and there mentioned the scheme to a council of grave old sachems, who all re-

* In justice to my friend Amar's personal appearance, I ought to mention that the original of the portrait on p. 74 was a far more typical Arab who accompanied me on one occasion.

ceived it with derision. One of them, taking the wall of the house in front of which they sat as an illustration, asked if I could walk up that, adding that the sides of the Mitlili were '*kifkif*'—just that sort of thing. I replied by pointing out a low wall close by, from which there ran another a little higher, from which latter the top of the house in question might be easily reached, and intimated that I should probably find some corresponding way to the top of the mountain. They seemed to think there might be something in that, but on the whole adhered to the original proposition, that the footing on the Mitlili was '*makash bono*'—not at all good. I may here observe that this word—strictly '*makanshi*, 'there is nothing,' but pronounced '*makash*'—is one of the words which no gentleman's vocabulary in Algeria should be without. Besides its everyday use as a simple negative, it serves, according to intonation, for Gammon! Stuff! Nonsense! Not a bit of it, You never made a greater mistake in your life, Dear me, Bless my heart, You don't mean to say so, You need·n't try to humbug me, I'm not such a fool as I look, &c. &c. With this and '*kifkif*' (to be employed in all cases where a comparison of any sort is to be instituted), and about a dozen more, the wanderer among the Arabs will be like Miss Pratt of Milby, 'competent to conduct a conversation on any topic whatever.'

I confess the arguments advanced against exploring the Mitlili had an effect the opposite of that intended,

and strengthened my determination to have a look at these tremendous cliffs before I left. But as I had plenty of time before me, I allowed myself to be put down for the present, and adopted Amar's amendment, that we should have a day or two on the range at the opposite side of the plain, one of the last spurs of the Auress running out into the Sahara. There, he said, we should find just as fine scenery, and, what he evidently considered much better, plenty of Feshtall. The Feshtall is the maned moufflon of the Atlas, the tragelaphus of the old writers, and the 'Aoudad' of modern naturalists. The latter is always said to be its Arab name, but I never once found that it was recognised by the Arabs, who invariably called the animal by the name I have given. He is a magnificent wild sheep, in size far exceeding the Sardinian moufflon, and approaching more nearly to the Bighorn of the Rocky Mountains. In an old male the horns are sometimes of enormous dimensions. I have seen some that must have been more than two feet in length, following the curve, and were thicker at the base than a man's arm. But his distinguishing feature is the thick flowing mane of light yellow hair, which begins just under the jaws, and extends along the front of the neck and chest to the knees, sometimes in a well-grown specimen actually sweeping the ground. Those who have seen the noble beast in the gardens in the Regent's Park will admit that he is game any sportsman might be proud to hunt;

but they can form but a faint idea of the figure he makes in his native mountains as he stands on some lofty crag, his long mane waving in the breeze, and his head proudly thrown back as he snuffs the tainted air that tells of the neighbourhood of man, the hereditary enemy of mutton. Still less can they imagine the agility with which, when once he has satisfied himself of the quarter from which the enemy approaches, he carries that stout carcase of his up rocks that the boldest cragsman would at least look twice at before he attempted them, or the marvellous speed with which he dashes along ledges affording barely a handbreadth of footing. I shall never forget the first time I fairly 'viewed' a feshtall in the El Kantra mountains. We were crawling along one of the steep smooth slopes of limestone peculiar to this part of the Atlas, and for my part I confess I was thinking more of the chances of finding water in the next ravine than of either scenery or sport, when Amar suddenly came to a point as perfect as the best broke dog in England could have made, and whispered excitedly, 'Feshtall!' There was nothing whatever to be seen under his nose, to my unpractised optics at least, except a little patch of gravel lying on a ledge of rock, but confident in his breeding and training I patted him on, and presently we came upon a bit of clay which bore the distinct impress of a hoof. At this, I must admit, I became as excited as he was, and on we went, up hill, down dale, scrambling

along shelves of rock, diving down gorges, clambering the opposite sides, crouching in that painful attitude which gives its special ache to each vertebra of the back, picking our steps painfully, lest a loose stone should give warning of our approach, Amar sometimes losing the trail and being forced to make a cast, but always with his miraculous powers of vision recovering it; until at last, as we were creeping over a ridge, he dropped as if he had been shot, and told me to look. For a long time I could see nothing but the opposite side of the ravine at the edge of which we were; but at last, helped by my guide, I made out the quarry. There he stood, screening himself from the sun, and evidently meditating a noonday nap under the friendly shade of the rocks, now and then jerking his head in an uncouth way, like an ovine Doctor Johnson, as if he was dissatisfied with himself and things in general. Retreating behind the brow, we consulted as to what was to be done. I proposed waiting until he lay down; but Amar, who knew the habits of the animal, was of opinion that the feshtall, like the weasel, was not to be caught asleep. He threw a pinch of dust into the air, but it floated back on us. There was no use, therefore, in attempting a stalk. We might by a détour of a couple of miles get round the head of the ravine; but then he would have the wind of us, and would be over the hills and far away long before we had completed the circuit. There was nothing for it, in fact, but to try the chance of a long shot—a chance about

which my friend was obviously far from sanguine, and we crept back to our first position. Making a rough guess at the distance across the ravine, I estimated it at something between three and four hundred yards, and putting up the highest sight of the rifle, fired as if for the top of his shoulder. A practised target shot well up in the Hythe position, and confident in his power of making 'centres' at three hundred yards, will perhaps laugh at the notion of missing an animal whose body is nearly as big as two centres; but every one who has tried it will know that shooting across a ravine of uncertain width, with nothing to help the eye with a hint as to the distance, the object being a dun-coloured animal backed by dun-coloured rocks; is a very different sort of thing from shooting at a clean white target over an accurately measured ground, where you have nothing to do but to put up the sight to the requisite height and hold the iron straight. A little puff of dust that rose into the air just below his fore-feet showed that, perhaps deceived by the clearness of the atmosphere, I had underrated the distance between us. But the hint was enough for the feshtall; with a spring that no one could have expected from so heavily built an animal, he reached the top of the rock under which he had been standing; and as he went bounding up the mountain side like an India-rubber ball, I gave him a parting shot with the other barrel that knocked splinters out of the rock just in front of his nose.

Though I did not get another chance of pulling a trigger, I saw many more, and I feel pretty sure that a hunter who was willing to give himself up to the sport, and had patience enough to carry him through frequent disappointments, would in the long run succeed in bagging feshtall. He will, however, have his work cut out for him. The chamois, wary as he is, is a fool to the feshtall, who far surpasses him in nose and in

ON THE TRACK.

cunning, while he is at least his equal in speed and climbing powers. So well do the Arabs know the difficulty of getting within shot, that they rarely attempt a stalk; the few that are killed by them are in general killed from an ambush built near some favourite drinking place. Nor is the chase of the feshtall less trying work than chamois hunting. It is true there are no glaciers to be crossed, and the height of these mountains is inconsiderable when compared with that of the Alps.

But the steep smooth slopes of limestone of the Southern Atlas afford quite as severe rock climbing as anything in the Oberland; and, besides, have to be climbed under a blazing sun.

I learned at least one useful lesson from these excursions. It was that the sturdy, hob-nailed, double-soled Balmoral is not the chaussure for African mountaineering. My first ramble was a series of disasters. I had no more foot-hold on those polished rocks than a cab-

GONE!

horse on a piece of wood pavement after a shower, and 'came down' so often that Amar's soul was filled with triumph. 'Barlez Mitlili! Makash!' he said in his patois, with a bitter emphasis; '*you* talk of the Mitlili. Stuff and nonsense!' The next time I went out I took a pair of sabats, or common yellow Arab slippers, which I put on at the foot of the mountain, slinging my boots over my shoulder, and in these performed sufficiently well to make Amar

withdraw his opposition. I took a mean and spiteful revenge, however, for his obstinacy. He was rather foot-sore after our long tramp, and the plain we had to cross was very rough and stony; so I kept up a good brisk pace across it, till he was compelled to protest, saying it was all very well for me; with my thick boots I was 'kifkif cheval'—just like a horse—over ground of this sort, but that, with his bare feet, he did not like it.

I am afraid the Arabs, including my friend Amar, lied freely in the account of the Mitlili. At least, I saw none of those hideous precipices they described, and encountered no greater difficulty than some tolerably stiff climbing in getting to the top. Happening to hint as much to Amar, he, I suspect, conceived the design of re-establishing his own character and that of the mountain. There was a sharp rocky peak near us which, though not the highest point, was, he said, the best for a view, and he proposed to climb it. We did succeed, but it was after a hard scramble, and I rather think he would have been just as well pleased had we failed; for whenever we came to a particularly *mauvais pas*—and there were one or two of that pleasant kind which obliges you to put your leg round a corner in blind faith, and feel for a footing—he used to turn and grin, as much as to say, 'There, how do you like that?' and then watch me in that provokingly expectant way in which the well-mounted man, after clearing his fence, turns to see if the man on the screw is 'coming to grief.' Once on

the top, the view I had longed for was before me. There lay the Sahara, a vast tawny plain, dotted with black spots, a huge leopard skin, to quote the old similitude, stretching away southwards an unbroken flat on to the dim blue line where the sky came down and met it.* There, in fact, lay the beginning of the desert and the end of Respectability. Absorbed in this tremendous thought I could have sat gazing due south a stricken hour at least; the more willingly as the wine bottle still held out, and a grateful breeze played round the summit of the peak. But Amar, whose religious principles were too sound to allow the wine to tempt him, and whose tastes inclined rather to sport than to philosophy, saw, or affirmed he saw, the slot of a feshtall below, and proposed a hunt instead of what he considered an objectless lounge on the top of a mountain. It came to nothing; we never even ran the game into

* It is now scarcely necessary to observe that the Sahara and the Great Desert are not identical, as most maps of Africa represent them to be. Where the Sahara ends and the Desert begins it is not easy to say, but probably the line may be drawn somewhere about latitude 32. The chief differences are that the oases, which occur at comparatively short intervals in the Sahara, are very few and very far between in the Desert, and that tracts wholly incapable of supporting vegetable life are in the former rather the exception than the general rule. In some old maps an attempt to do justice to the true character of the Sahara appears in the barbarous title of 'Bildulgerid,' translated into 'the country of dates.' The real phrase is 'Blad el djard,' 'the bare country,' and it is applied by the Arabs chiefly to the region south of Tunis, lying round the lake Tritonis of the Ancients.

view, but the trail led us into such wild gorges and wonderful ravines, walled in by tall grey rocks, and rich with semitropical vegetation, that I felt the expedition had at least paid its expenses.

CHAPTER V.

THE SAHARA.

THOUGH I had pretty well exhausted the attractions of El Kantra, when the day came round for the diligence to Biskara, I felt sorry to leave that friendly spot where I had spent so many pleasant hours. About half way between El Kantra and Biskara is one of the 'remarkables,' as the old travellers quaintly call them, of Algeria, the great salt mountain of El Outaia. This is no mere hill with lumps of salt cropping out of it, but an honest bonâ fide mountain, probably at least four or five miles in circumference, and seven or eight hundred feet high, with peaks, precipices, valleys, grottoes, and all things proper to a mountain, entirely composed of pure rock-salt. There can be no doubt that this is one of the series of salt-hills which Herodotus mentions as standing at intervals of ten days' journey all along 'the ridge of sand stretching from Thebes to the pillars of Hercules.' Whether it is the last of the five he enumerates is another matter. The information of Herodotus was in all probability derived from travellers' accounts of the regular caravan route along the north of Africa; we cannot, therefore, expect much accuracy as to dis-

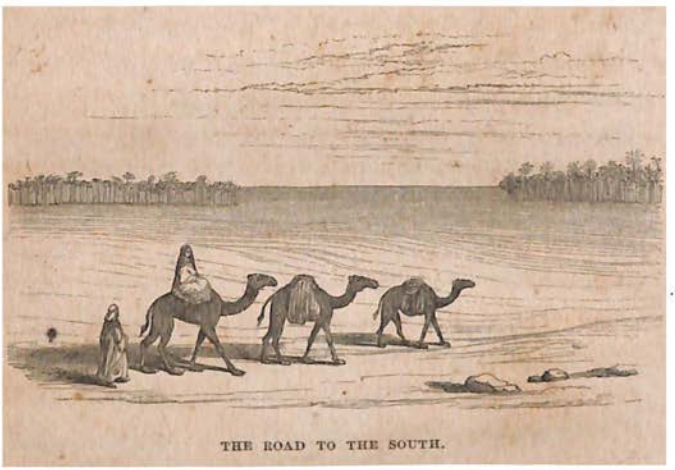
tances; but it is pretty certain that the fifth hill was at no very great distance from this spot. The descriptive touches he gives are a much safer clue to identification; and we find that this fifth hill was near a mountain called Atlas, which was said to be so lofty that its tops could never be seen, 'for the clouds never leave them, summer or winter.' There are other hills of salt to the south-east, but none so situated that a lofty cloud-capped mountain, or any mountain at all, forms a part of the landscape in which they are placed: while close behind the salt mountain of El Outaia rises the great mass of the Auress, whose ridges and plateaus, as I have often remarked, seem to have a special aptitude, from their extent and elevation, for condensing any moisture there may be in the winds that blow over them from the Sahara. It is true the Auress cannot be in strictness described as *a* mountain, being rather an assemblage of mountains closely wedged together, but then the old caravan traveller was not likely to have an intimate acquaintance with its details, and most likely only conveyed the impression which a very distant view left on his mind. If this be so, the Auress is a region of superior classicality, containing the garden of the Hesperides and the Pillar of Heaven, and entering largely into the histories of Perseus and Hercules.

A few miles beyond El Outaia you cross a low ridge and descend on the great plain. No more mountains

now until you reach—who knows what?—perhaps the chain where M. du Chaillu hunted the gorilla; perhaps the range that feeds the lake Nyanza. As you proceed things become more and more desert-like. The caravans, which among the upper plains and in the Tell consisted of five or six camels and as many men, are here troops of sixty or eighty, accompanied by a whole tribe. First come the sheikh and the chief men on horseback, each with a long gun at his back, and generally a greyhound or two following him; then follows a string of camels, carrying things that look at a distance like big blue band-boxes, but are in reality travelling harems, containing the women of the party. Then come camels with the tents and tent-poles, and more camels carrying large fat brown sacks of grain, with clusters of small, lean, brown children perched on the top of them, aloft in mid-air. Then follow the tag-rag and bobtail and dogs, and then more camels, and so on for perhaps half a mile. Moving in a parallel line out on the plain, are the flocks of the tribe 'ring-straked, speckled, and spotted' like those of Jacob; and we may be sure just such a train as this was it that met the eyes of Esau as he rode out from Seir.

The gait of the camel is admirably described by that queer old traveller, William Lithgow: 'He hath a most slow and lazy pace, removing the one foot from the

other as though he were weighing his feet in a balance.' He moves along in a deliberate saunter, with his long, grave face poked forward, and turning neither to the right nor to the left. 'Eothen' speaks of 'the gentle womanish ways' of the camel; but there is one trait in its character to which he does not allude, and which is certainly not gentle, though ill-natured people may feel



THE ROAD TO THE SOUTH.

inclined to call it womanish. The camel is about the most unreasonable animal in the world. There is no satisfying it. It complains just as loudly against lying down as against rising up—just as bitterly against being relieved of its burden as against being loaded; and when passing an Arab camp you hear it making night hideous with its peevish roar, you may be sure its master

is doing all he can to make it comfortable. It has just one beautiful feature—the great soft full eye, with its drooping lid and long black lashes, and half-closed look of patient suffering, as if from an aching brow. This redeems the picturesque but positive ugliness of the camel, and makes you forget his uncouth head and lean carcase, and graceless splay-footed legs. As Charles Lamb said of the Jews, he is 'a piece of stubborn antiquity.' As you look at him, you feel that he belongs to an old world. He is alone among the animals of this latter earth. He has no congeners, no country cousins, no wild relatives to show that at any period, however remote, he was other than he is now—a 'hereditary bondsman.' Go back as far as you can, and you always find him in the company of the nomad, 'always moving on' at the command of necessity—the great original policeman. True to the traditions of a vagabond ancestry, he refuses to fraternise with progress. In Egypt the railway fills him with disgust; and here in Algeria, when the diligence meets him, he turns his solemn face away and sidles out into the plain to avoid the loathed object. If it comes on him unexpectedly, he is paralysed. I remember on this very journey to Biskara, we came suddenly upon a caravan in the evening after the lamps of the diligence had been lit. As we bore down upon him, the leading camel gave a grunt of dismay and

dropped incontinent on his knees in the middle of the road, sending the Arab who rode him nearly under the noses of our horses. The sight of those two glaring eyes coming down on him out of the darkness was too much for him. Civilisation was all very well, but when it came in such a questionable shape the patriarchal old beast could not comprehend it, and knelt to entreat its forbearance.*

Biskara is the advanced post of the province of Constantina on the south, though the French generally have a few soldiers at Tuggurt, and their authority is recognised as far as Waregla. It consists of a French town and an Arab town; the former compact and regular, with low white houses and wide streets, the latter straggling away in every direction under the palm-trees of the oasis. For an Algerian town, there is some life and activity at Biskara. It is, in fact, the capital of this part of the Sahara, and if properly managed might become to the Great Desert very much what

* That venerable notion—as old at least as Herodotus—about the camel terrifying the horse by its appearance and smell, has, I fear, no foundation in fact. Among the Arabs the two animals have been associated for ages, and even the horse of European blood does not, as far as I could see, object to the camel on any such personal grounds. Of the two, it has always seemed to me that it is the camel that objects to the horse; not from antipathy, but on principle—on the same principle on which he objects to towns. It is hard to say which looks more uncomfortable in a town, a Bedouin or a camel.

SAHARAN VILLAGE. OASIS OF BISKARA.

Marseilles is to the Mediterranean. Even as it is, nowhere, not even at Algiers, is there a greater mixture of the races of Northern Africa. There are traders from Tunis, Tripoli, and Morocco; sleek quiet-looking Beni M'zabites from the archipelago of oases south of El Aghouat; haggard bony men from the far depths of the Great Desert—staring at civilisation with wild eyes, like sailors cast upon a strange coast; and here and there perhaps a sturdily-built Kabyle from the mountains, or a genuine unadulterated negro from Timbuctoo. But, as everywhere else in French Africa, it is the soldier that is the leading man at Biskara. It is for him those neat white streets have been built. It is his custom the vermuth and absinthe merchant seeks, and his recreation and refreshment that are considered at the *café*, where the billiard-balls are clicking all day long. For even here, under the palm-trees, they have billiards: more than this, they have a theatre, and a theatre worthy of the Sahara. It is simply one of the native houses with the flat roof removed; and when, between the acts, you look up, instead of a cut-glass chandelier, you have the stars hanging (as they always seem to be in these latitudes) from the dark blue vault overhead, and instead of gilding or stucco, festoons of palm branches for the decoration of the walls and stage. The actors are all militaires, chiefly, I believe, noncommissioned officers of the Zouaves, and a more generally

efficient company I have seldom seen. The comic man in particular would have brought down any house in Paris or London. The plot of the piece I saw depended, as well as I recollect, on the involvement consequent on the fact that everyone except her grandmother is in love with the gentle and lovely Celeste (a strapping young corporal, with a deep bass voice, blue chin, and remarkably broad shoulders). Plunged into despair by her coldness, they all enlist, except the comic man, whose tastes are not military, and who sings a comic song instead. Everybody fights, or is on the point of fighting, a duel with everybody else (except, of course, the comic man, who is kicked), when mutual explanations take place, and everybody embraces everybody else. Who it is that ultimately gets Celeste is not made very clear, but as every one of the enlisted is promoted to the rank of sous-lieutenant (for some act of gallantry not mentioned), no one has any right to complain, except the comic man, who relieves the audience from any anxiety on his account by singing a song expressive of his satisfaction with things in general. For the comfort of those persons who dread these formidable warriors, and believe that they are always athirst for glory and ready to go to war for an idea, I may add that the great hit of the evening was the popular song of 'L'Amour et Bacchus,' the burden of which is that fighting is a bore and that glory is 'bosh,' and that

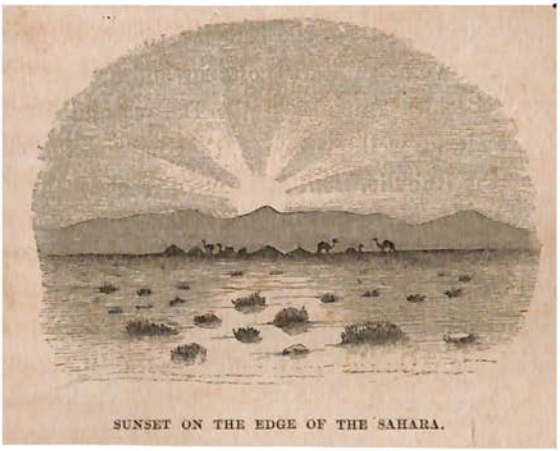
man's most sensible occupation is the cultivation of the above-named divinities. There were one or two Arabs present, but I am afraid they hardly understood the jokes of the piece, and perhaps the reflection that theory is one thing and practice another prevented them from being carried away by the sentiment of the song.

Their own entertainments are of a very different character. Biskara is full of Arab *cafés*. As you go down one of the streets at night, you see a blaze of light issuing from an open door ahead of you, and catch notes as of a bagpipe gone melancholy mad. This is Arab music. If you look in at the door, you see a number of grave, silent men, sitting cross-legged or lying on benches all round the room. At one end, behind a small illumination of wax-lights, are the musicians, one of them belabouring a tomtom, another tootling furiously at a kind of dwarf clarionet, perhaps a third with something not unlike the banjo, the national instrument of the neighbouring kingdom of Ethiopia. Presently, out of a bundle of drapery in one corner there rises a female figure, that begins to revolve slowly about the floor, precisely after the manner of the little figures on the top of the old-fashioned barrel organs, all the while holding out her long muslin headgear at arm's length. This is Arab dancing. And sometimes one of the musicians will lift up his voice, and cry

'nya ya ya' through his nose for a quarter of an hour together: and this is Arab singing. A strong faith in Orientalism will perhaps help the European to find grace and harmony in the Arab *café*; but it must be very strong to induce him to imitate those grave, silent men, who will sit for hours under this kind of entertainment.

At one time I had an idea of going on as far as Tuggurt; but I could find no party starting southwards, and did not altogether relish the notion of a solitary journey of five or six days through the Sahara. Besides, the days were shortening, and I wished to spend some time in the country of the Kabyles. As a substitute, however, I took a mule, and rode out one day through the Arab town and the palm-groves, on into the great plain south of the oasis. I strolled along for miles, sometimes over hillocks of soft sand, sometimes over flats of hard gravel, through which small stunted prickly shrubs forced their way, until the palm-trees of Biskara had become little more than a dark streak on the plain behind me. On the right was a second streak, which represented the oasis of Oumash; on the left a third, behind which lay the ancient town of Sidi Okbah. Between these two last, the plain stretched away southwards until it cut against the sky in a sharp black line. That way lay the great track to the south—in fact, the road to Timbuctoo; but as I was not going

to Timbuctoo, and as the evening was closing in, I returned to Biskara, and next morning was *en route* for La Grande Kabylie.



SUNSET ON THE EDGE OF THE SAHARA.

CHAPTER VI.

'BORDJ-BOU-ARERIDJ.'

FOR the better suppression of any reactionary movements on the part of the Kabyles, the French have established several military posts in and around their country. Besides Aumale, Setif, Dellys, and Bugia, which are always well garrisoned, they have in the very heart of the Kabylie, Beni Mansour, Dra el Mzan, and Fort Napoleon, a strongly-fortified permanent camp, fixed on the summit of one of the northern spurs of the Djurjura, the establishment of which is admitted by the tribes themselves to have given the deathblow to Kabyle independence. On the south side, the Kabylie is held in check by the euphoniously-named fortress of Bordj-bou-Areridj. To an unscientific eye it does not seem a particularly formidable fortress. As you approach from the side of Setif, it has an absurd burlesque likeness to Stirling Castle. Out of the bare brown dusty plain which stretches away for miles on every side, there rises a kind of hillock or heap at least five-and-twenty feet high, on the top of which sits a little fort defying creation. But, if not well calculated for inspiring fear abroad, it is very imposing in its own immediate circle,

like some men who make up for their want of weight with the world by an overbearing demeanour at home. Round about the base of the mound, which is planted with sticks that have hitherto shown no disposition to become trees, and is, further, strewed with a profusion of broken glass, suggesting that at some period in its history the citadel suffered a bombardment of empty bottles, there is clustered a meek village of subdued white houses, to all appearance so effectually snubbed that they have hardly spirit for more than one story. Upon these the fort looks down with a severity of loop-hole and battlement that shows it is determined to be respected here, whatever the Kabyles yonder may think of it. Odds bombshells! it is not a fort to be trifled with, and Mr. Bash Hammar, and the keeper of the baths, and the two rival café proprietors, the leading citizens, had better mind what they are about, and not attempt to incite the populace to insurrectionary proceedings, or their shops will be about their ears in five minutes.

One of these houses had sufficient self-assertion left to call itself an hotel, trusting to its ability to make up two beds, and its possession of a bar and a hen-coop, to support the character. Here, as Bordj-bou-Areridj is a good starting-point for a journey through the Kabylie, I took up my quarters, intending to remain no longer than was necessary to charter a mule and guide, and lay in provisions for the expedition. But mules were scarce, and their owners disinclined to hire

them out for even a two days' journey into the Kabyle mountains; so I stayed on at Borj day after day, living upon hens and the hope of deliverance. The dreariness of the place was of itself a sufficient reason for being anxious to quit it, but I had yet another in the penitentiary for fowls just mentioned. Not that I objected to a poultry diet; the traveller in out-of-the-way places in North Africa must take what he can get, and be thankful, even though he may find that 'fare is fowl' to a monotonous extent. The fact is, I found myself steadily eating my way through the occupants of the coop up to a certain elderly bird whose figure promised a toughness such as I had never yet encountered, and I vowed to submit to almost any extortion in the way of mule-hire, rather than regale on his accursed carcase. Like the prisoner of Chillon, this old cock had been so long in confinement that he had become quite used to it, for death, as the Arabs put it, 'would not accept of him' by reason of his extreme unfitness for the table. Day by day he saw his plumper and worthier companions carried off; but the fact that they were taken, and he left, excited no thankful feeling in his obdurate breast. On the contrary, I think it made him arrogant and self-conceited. He ascribed to his merits what was due simply to his seniority, and contemplated the future with the eye of a sceptic and a materialist. Being a bird of advanced opinions, he had shaken off that

prejudice of his race which makes crowing a ceremony connected with daybreak, and took a purely secular and sensual view of the matter, crowing all through the night whenever the whim seized him, and treating it as a branch of the fine arts in which he obviously considered himself a proficient. There was something, too, peculiarly aggravating about his crow. It was always delivered in two parts; the first addressed to the world in general; the second, a kind of self-satisfied confidential clucking, to himself and those in his immediate neighbourhood, as much as to say, 'There! and now perhaps you'll furnish me with the name and address of any cock you know of that can turn out a crow like that.' In short, while he was an impending fate, a Damocles' sword, by day, he was as bad as a troubled conscience by night, for the head of my bed was within three feet of his dungeon, and more than once I thought it would be almost as well to eat him and have done with him. I might escape with dyspepsia. But vengeance, though long delayed, came at last. Day by day I saw my fate approaching, like the ceiling in that horrible story of 'The Iron Shroud,' until one night I found that not a single fowl remained between me and the old rooster, and I 'bitterly thought of the morrow' and the morrow's breakfast. As for him, the nearness of his last necessity brought no nearer conformity unto it, as Sir Thomas Browne would say, and his last hours on earth were spent in reckless and indecent riot. But

some time after midnight the house was roused up by the arrival of two belated travellers from Aumale. With—to quote the words of the poet—feelings that can be more easily imagined than described, I heard the demand made as to what there was for supper, and the answer given that fowl was available; and shortly after, just outside my door, the shrieks and struggles of the expiring cock told me I was saved and avenged. The travellers, as it afterwards appeared, survived the night, for I met them next morning at breakfast, which was an inferior meal, but, they affirmed, far better than their supper, for, said they, 'les poulets de ce pays-ci sont affreusement durs.'

I mention this old cock because it is to him that, to some extent, I owe a pleasant excursion, and something of an adventure. Weary of hearing him singing his own praises, and of the monotony of Borj-bou-Areridj generally, I determined to go abroad in search of excitement. About ten miles to the south of the village there rises a noble mountain range, called on the map the Djebel Khellouf, but mentioned by Dr. Shaw as the 'Jibbel I'ate,' which separates the plain of the Medjana from the Sahara. From an inspection with the telescope, and 'from information which I received,' it seemed probable that a day or two might be spent in exploring its wilds with at least as much pleasure and advantage as in watching the manœuvres of the soldiers in the barrack, or the bargainings of the Arabs in the market-

place. An arrangement was accordingly made with an Arab who had no objection to let out his mule for a short job. He was to deposit me and provisions for a couple of days at a certain spot on the mountain-side which he professed to know intimately, where there was a camp of French woodcutters and charcoal-burners. Here I proposed to remain as long as meat and drink lasted, and then return on foot. The plan was a simple one enough, but unfortunately its execution depended on the statement of an Arab. For seven or eight hours we plodded onwards and upwards under the shade of the mighty cedars which clothe the mountain from base to summit, without coming upon a sign of camp or woodcutters. This seemed strange, and turning to my guide for an explanation, I perceived that his face, which in the morning had beamed with confidence and self-esteem, now wore a rather puzzled and dejected expression. It was easy to see how matters stood, and after a little cross-examination, it came out that he had never been on the mountain before, and knew nothing whatever of the camp except by hearsay. He swore stoutly, however, that it was somewhere in our neighbourhood; so stoutly, that had I not had the word of others for it, I should unquestionably have doubted its existence. When in doubt, lead trumps, says Hoyle; when in a difficulty, take refreshment, is the corresponding maxim for the mountaineer. It helps to remove irritation, makes you take a

philosophical view of your position, and gives you time to think. Thus fortified, I resolved to push on for the highest point of the mountain, which rose just above our heads, leaving the guide and his beast to follow at their own leisurely pace, and there look out for smoke ascending through the trees, or any other signs of human life. If there was nothing of the sort to be seen, it was clear we must make up our minds for a bivouac, for to return was out of the question. And nothing of the sort was to be seen. There were fidgety mountain partridges running in and out of the brushwood below, and a pair of stately lämmergeiers wheeling in wide circles high over head, but these were the only signs of life within the visible horizon. Right and left stretched the great cedar forest, filling up the glens with dense masses of dark green, forming broad shelves of foliage along the steep sides of the ravines, lying sparse and thin on the bleak summits where gnarled stems and bleached tree-skeletons showed how storms swept over the Atlas, but everywhere grim, still, and silent. And for stillness and silence, there is no place like a cedar forest. On the sultriest, most breezeless day, there is always a stir and a whisper among the leaves of the oak and the needles of the pine; but the cedar is a tree not susceptible of the gentler emotions. He may writhe and groan under a storm, but he is far too rigid to yield to the blandishments of a zephyr. Go, gentle gales, and play with the

fair young beech or the light quivering aspen; he is too grave and stiff and old for such trifling. 'Passez, jeunes filles, passez;' was he not the patriarch of the woods when Solomon went forth to study botany?

On descending, I found that mule and guide had disappeared. My first impression, of course, was that the miscreant had bolted with my plaid and the provisions, and I felt rather in a fix. A night under the greenwood tree is no very great evil in fine weather; but then it is as well to have some creature-comforts beyond a lump of bread, a half-empty dram-flask, and some tobacco, which were all the stores I had. On second thoughts, however, I felt it was absurd to fancy that even an Arab would think it worth his while to make off with such paltry plunder, especially when he was certain to be caught sooner or later. A free expenditure of breath in shouting at last brought an answer from below; and I perceived my friend making for a kind of col or depression in the ridge, obviously with the intention of crossing over to the other side. On rejoining him and asking what he was about, I found he was utterly opposed to camping in the woods. It was not to be thought of, he argued, on account of the cold at night and certain lawless Arabs who pervaded these mountains, not to speak of lions and panthers. But, on the other side, there were honest and civil Arabs, who would gladly give us shelter and kous-kous. Well, perhaps a tent was better than a tree if it rained, and perhaps the

woods were not safe, though I more than suspected at the time what I afterwards found to be the case, that his description of the dangers was largely embellished with the Oriental figure, 'bosh.' The woodcutters, whom we did find the next day, had never seen or heard lion or panther during their residence in the forest, and were of opinion that the Arabs who were about were not a bit worse than any other Arabs. As we crossed the col before mentioned, we had a wonderful scene before us. As far as the eye could reach to the south and west, the vast plain of the Sahara lay spread out, a great yellow sea, into which the sun was sinking like a disk of burnished copper. A strange reddish haze, as if the air was saturated with desert sand, hung all along the horizon. Many miles away to the south was a long shining strip which I knew must be the great lake of Msilah, the largest in that chain of salt lakes which runs across the Sahara from the Gulf of Cabes to the Morocco frontier. Below us the mountain side went down steeply for some distance, and then broke off into a series of bluffs and buttresses, separated by deep grassy valleys. Down one of these we travelled, and presently we came on one of the honest civil Arabs, leading his goats home. He was evidently puzzled at my guide's proposition about lodging in the tents of his tribe, but he raised no particular objection; and before long we came in sight of the encampment to which he belonged.

I had no means of ascertaining what were the state-

ments made by my guide in introducing me to the notice of the authorities, but I have reason to believe that the tone he adopted was very much that of a popular instructor wishing to secure some provincial town-hall, and the interest of the mayor and corporation, for a lecture which he proposed to deliver to the inhabitants. I do not mean to disparage the hospitality of our worthy hosts, and I have no doubt that had I been alone and unintroduced I should have been just as well treated; but, as matters stood, it was quite plain that my muleteer—my keeper, perhaps, I ought to say—put me on the footing of an 'object of interest' rather than of a guest. It must be admitted there were certain temptations before him. Europeans are very scarce in those parts of the mountains; and it is by no means unlikely this was the first time anything of the sort had ever been seen in that valley, and that at least one-half of the people of the camp had never before had an opportunity of examining closely a specimen of that variety of the human race. As a mere belated traveller in search of lodging and refreshment, he was nothing. He had simply a claim to food and shelter. But as the proprietor of an ethnological curiosity he became a person of importance; he was entitled to consideration, and might converse even with sheikhs as an equal.

For myself, as Captain Gulliver says, 'I considered myself to be a perfect stranger in the country, and that such a misfortune could never be charged upon me as a

reproach;' so I submitted, and was docile, and, I hope, instructive. But ever since I have had a fellow-feeling for dwarfs, giants, Bosjesmans, Aztecs, fat boys, albinoes, pig-faced ladies, and all other fellow-creatures who are exhibited on account of their abnormal appearance. I go to see them much oftener than before; and when I see the poor creature walking round and trying to look as if he did not mind it, I feel tempted to say, 'O Giant! —O Fat Boy!—there is one here who can sympathise with you: there is one here who knows the effect of fifty eyes staring at you "with a wild surmise"—who has experienced what it is to contemplate some two dozen faces, each saying, as plain as expression can say it, "Well, I don't wish to be personal, but you *are* a queer-looking object."' I should have liked to remain outside, for the scene had its picturesque points,—the circle of low black tents, the gaunt wild-looking figures of the Arabs, stalking about, or sitting in clusters, and eyeing us curiously from under the hoods of their bernouses; the flocks coming trooping in to camp for the night, and the great mountain range behind us growing black as the light faded from the sky. But my exhibitor would not permit it. He evidently thought that, like the giant in the 'Old Curiosity Shop,' who took to sweeping a crossing, I was making myself common and injuring him, and he insisted on retiring to one of the tents.

At first I was on what may be called private view, at

least only a few of the elders of the camp were admitted, who examined with much interest my knife, watch, revolver, and especially a pocket compass, which, I fear, was explained to them as a Christian talisman by means of which a man might travel to Mecca, or Algiers, or Timbuctoo, without once asking the way; my guide all the time giving a popular sketch of European manners and customs—as I inferred from his frequent employment of the word 'Roumi'—and using me as an illustration. The general public began to drop in afterwards, but there was no provision for admitting children at half-price—perhaps the Arab paterfamilias did not think me an improving spectacle—and the younger members of the community were driven to taking surreptitious glimpses of the performance under the edge of the tent, which materially improved the ventilation. For some time I continued drawing crowded tents; but at last, owing no doubt to the fact that every one belonging to the camp had been in, the popular excitement seemed to be dying away; and then my spirited proprietor got up the startling novelty of supper. This made quite a sensation scene, especially when the wine-bottle was produced, as it was, with some remarks which were, I have no doubt, to the following effect:—'And now, O children of Abd-Allah, or Ben Daoud (or whatever the name of the tribe was), this descendant of Roumi jackasses, whom I have caught and brought here for your amusement at enormous expense, will drink *el shrab*, the

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abominable beverage of the Christians—(may the grave of its inventor be defiled!). Although he is a drunkard by habit, his manners are mild and pleasing, and at the end of the performance he will shake hands with any lady or gentleman that desires it.'

But perhaps the most brilliant stroke of all was getting me to eat some kous-kous, which I was obliged to do, although loath, to avoid giving offence. In a well-regulated Arab establishment, where they have a professed cook, kous-kous is far from unpalatable. It is wheaten flour, rolled by the hands into compact pellets about the size of duck-shot, then boiled, and served up with milk, butter, or grease of some sort. But the worthy people in whose tent we were, being simply country-folk, did not keep an artiste—a plainer cook I never saw—and the process and the result were not appetising. The kous-kous looked and smelt just like a mess of brewer's grains seasoned with train oil, and was turned out into a huge wooden bowl, round which the family squatted. Not the ladies, of course: they had nothing to do with the dish, except preparing it. Wooden spoons were served out in the proportion of one to every six *convives*; but I observed that the correct way of feeding was to plunge your hand into the mass, grasp a handful, give it a good squeeze to get rid of the extra grease, and cram it down your throat. One old fellow who sat next me, and was evidently a man accustomed to good society, always used his long grey

beard in the light of a napkin after each handful. I had prospected a little digging of my own in an untouched part of the heap, and was making a great show of appetite; but this old gentleman thrust his venerable paw up to the wrist into the hole I had been feeding out of, and I had to give up, and explain that I found kous-kous, like pork pie, very filling at the price. A great deal of it, however, disappeared before the Arabs were filled.

A night in an Arab tent by no means partakes of the peace and calm which are supposed to belong to pastoral life. The turning in of the last Arab, and the hanging up of the curtain across the tent door, seem to be the signals for a concert on the part of the animals of the tribe. The sheep and goats which have been driven at nightfall, begin to bleat perseveringly about the encampment; and the dogs, of which there are always three or four per tent, keep up an incessant barking in every note of the canine gamut, to let the world know that, however men may trust it, they do not mean to go to sleep while it is in its present dishonest state. Sometimes there will be a lull for a minute or so, but some unlucky jackal will whine in the distance, or a bark will come on the breeze from some far-off camp, and instantly dogs, and sheep, and goats are off again; and so it goes on all night. Nor is this the only annoyance which the dogs give a stranger. If you lie down near the edge of the tent, as a European always will for the

sake of air, you feel, in the night-watches, something grubbing at your feet or your head, and become aware of a wolf-like countenance and a pair of wicked eyes glaring in at you. It is no use, even if you knew the Arabic for it, calling him 'poor fellow' or 'good old doggy.' He is not to be coaxed, but treats you to a snarl that says plainly, 'I can't bite you now, because it would make a row, and I should be kicked; but just come outside, and see if I don't consult my feelings in reference to the calf of your leg.' He has just one redeeming quality, the Arab dog; he is an arrant coward, and holds a stone in great awe. No traveller ought ever to approach an encampment, or douar, without providing himself with half-a-dozen heavy stones; and if he delivers a good family shot into the first pack that rushes at him, he may be let pass. He must take care, however, while he meets an attack in front, lest his flank be turned by the supports coming up from behind the tents.

We had not provisions enough left for a second night out; so although we succeeded in finding the woodcutter's camp in the course of the next day's ramble, we returned to Bordj, where, at last, I was lucky enough to get a man and horse to take me a two-days' journey to Beni Mansour, in the Kabyle country. There I hoped to fine some means of crossing the Djurdjura to Fort Napoleon, where only a short day's journey would remain between me and the

bi-weekly diligence from the Kabylie to Algiers. Consequently, one fine October morning, as the sun was sending its first rays over the wide plain of the Medjana, two travellers might have been seen mounting the southern slopes of the Kabyle highlands, one of whom, as they crossed the first ridge that rose above the plain, looked back at Bordj-bou-Areridj as though he cared not if he never saw it again.

CHAPTER VII.

LA GRANDE KABYLIE.

THE district which the French, somewhat grandiloquently, call 'La Grande Kabylie,' is a rugged mountainous region, lying partly in the province of Algiers, partly in that of Constantina. It may be roughly described as a quadrilateral, about eighty miles by sixty in extent, bounded on its north side by the Mediterranean; on the south by the great plain of the Medjana, so famous all through North Africa for its breed of horses; on the west by the stream of the Isser; and on the east by the high road from Setif to Bugia. Its limits are further defined by the position of four rather important French settlements, one at each corner: Dellys and Bugia at the north-west and north-east, Aumale and Setif at the south-west and south-east. Within these boundaries lies the country which, both as regards its scenery and the character and institutions of its inhabitants, may claim to be considered the Switzerland of North Africa. The noble chain of the Djebel Djurdjura, with peaks rising more than seven thousand feet above the level of the sea, runs diagonally from the south-western angle, near Aumale, to the north-eastern,

where it terminates with the Mount Gouraya and Cape Carbon, just above Bugia. North and south of this chain lie two main lines of valley; that of the Sahel on the south, that of Sebaou on the north. These are the leading geographical features of the Great Kabylia. The rest of its area is a wild confusion of lofty mountain ridges, each with a village perched upon its extremest point, and separated from its neighbour by a deep dark ravine, whose sides are clothed with tangled thickets of evergreen oak, or luxuriant groves of fig and olive. So much for the general aspect of the country. It is inhabited by a race that in almost every particular presents a strong contrast to the Arabs of the plains below. The Arab is lithe and slender in figure, and generally of an aquiline cast of countenance; the Kabyle is squarely and sturdily built, rather broad-faced, and with a nose of the type which is described as 'ordinaire' on a French passport. The normal state of the Arab is that of a wanderer and a dweller in tents: he has no instinctive attachment to the soil, and when he does take to a settled life, it is as it were under protest; contenting himself with an unsubstantial and flimsy dwelling, and bestowing no more labour on the ground than is required to raise him a scanty crop of barley. The Kabyle, on the other hand, clings as tightly to his rocks as a limpet: he builds himself a comfortable, substantial house, with stone walls and a tiled roof, and changes the rough mountain

side into a rich garden. The Arab hates labour and has few manufactures; the Kabyle is industrious, and a clever handicraftsman, especially in the working of metals. The Arab lies freely and objectlessly, and pilfers for the love of pilfering: his statement is valueless, except as a means of arriving at the truth by a kind of inductive process. The Kabyle, as a general rule, tells the truth, and, unless you are at enmity with him, respects your property. He will make a hard bargain with you, but, once made, he will keep to it; unlike the Arab, who, if you leave him a loophole, will wriggle out through it. With strangers there is a mixture of shyness and obsequiousness in the Arab's behaviour, while about the Kabyle there is an unmistakable air of independence and self-reliance, as if he did not much care what you thought about him. In short, there is little or nothing of the Asiatic about the Kabyle. Even his Mahomedanism is of an unoriental cast. Though he does not deny the lawfulness of polygamy, he considers that on the whole a man ought to be content with one wife, and admits the woman to be a perfectly rational being, quite fit to be entrusted with her liberty, deserving of social equality, and not born to do more than her fair share of the work of the household. His form of government is essentially democratic: the Amin, who corresponds generally to the sheikh among the Arabs, is elected by the universal suffrage of his village. The Amins of

all the villages of a tribe form its parliament; and one of the number, elected by themselves, acts as the chief of the whole tribe—the head magistrate in peace, and commander of the forces in war. The tribes, again, bind themselves together by a 'soff,' or league, offensive and defensive; so that, as General Daumas says, 'politically speaking, the Kabylie is a kind of savage Switzerland.' It is to this federal organisation of the tribes that he, as well as Jules Gérard, traces the origin of the name, which in its Arabic form of K'baïl signifies nothing more than 'The Tribes.'

It is far more easy to say what the Kabyle is not than what he is. Whatever he may be, he certainly is not a member of the Arab family. He is, geologically speaking, the oldest formation among the many strata of which the population of North Africa is composed. He may be the descendant of some of the ancient Libyan tribes mentioned by Herodotus, or of the Massyli, Masæsyllii, and others found in occupation by the Romans, or of the Vandals driven into the mountains by Belisarius, or the offspring of a mixture of all these; but at any rate he dates from a period earlier than that of the invasion of Africa by the Saracens. In default of any positive evidence, it must be confessed there is a certain amount of probability on the side of the Vandalic theory. Unless the Vandals were completely exterminated, or absorbed by the Arab invaders—neither of which hypotheses is at all a likely one—they are

still to be found in North Africa. It is true the same argument holds good with respect to the Libyans, ancient Numidians, and others; but then we have the Touaregs, the Chaambi, the Beni-Mzabites, and several other Desert and Sahara tribes, quite distinct from the Arab, and much more probable representatives of the older peoples of Barbary than the Kabyles. Assuming, then, that there is somewhere the conquered remnant of a Gothic race, where are we so likely to find it as in the fastnesses of the mountains? But, wherever, all through North Africa, the mountains are highest and steepest, there we do find a people with a number of characteristics, physical as well as moral, which are decidedly Gothic, and whose tradition besides generally points to a Northern origin.

La Grande Kabylie owes its title and its importance to its position. The other mountain districts inhabited by the Kabyles, such as the Auress for instance, have given the French but little trouble. They lie out of the way, and it was never worth while taking any extraordinary pains about their complete subjugation. With the Grande Kabylie it was quite otherwise. Here was a compact mountain stronghold, lying just between the two most important French settlements, Algiers and Constantina, and held by a sturdy independent race of mountaineers, who had defied the Arabs, from whom the Turks had never been able to get a penny of tribute, and who showed no disposition to be more submissive

to the Turks' successors. This was a state of things 'most tolerable and not to be endured,' especially when, on the other side, there was an army in prime fighting condition and in want of work. We need read but little history to know what must inevitably happen under such a combination of circumstances, nor can we honestly blame the French for looking on the conquest of the Kabylie as an absolute necessity. Any other nation in the same position would have done the same, and very likely the Kabyles were lawless and troublesome. But it was not until the end of the year 1857, after more than one hardly-fought campaign, in which many a village was pillaged and burned, and many a mountain ridge crossed with severe loss to the conquerors, that the last Kabyle tribe gave in its submission, and his Majesty the Emperor of the French reigned supreme from Algiers to Constantina.

The first half of the first day's journey into the Kabyle country was neither interesting nor exciting. Hour after hour we continued to mount, wind along, and descend steep, bare, brown hill-sides, all alike, and I began to think there was not much, after all, in the scenery of the Kabylie. My guide was unavailable for purposes of conversation, for he did not understand a word of French, and my Arabic was exhausted when I had asked what the first village was called; and as the sun got high in the heavens he began to beat upon us unpityingly. Then there arose a struggle between

indolence and compassion. Indolence said, Get up and ride. Compassion said, No, poor beast, he has enough to carry with your portmanteau and that able-bodied Arab. But indolence ultimately had the best of it, and quieting my conscience by recollecting that I had many a time seen horses and mules twice as heavily laden, I mounted in front, while my Arab sat behind and chanted the dreariest ditty I ever heard. When the poet asks some one to give him again his Arab steed, he must have in his eye an Arab steed purchased for a reasonable price, and not one of those to be had for hire. Nobody with any experience of the latter animal would express a wish of the kind about him. But there is yet a lower depth—an Arab mule of the sort that does the carrying business in Algeria. There is some chance of stimulating the horse into a temporary spasmodic liveliness, and he occasionally varies his gait by a trip or a stumble. But the mule plods on from morning to night at the same unvarying dawdling pace. You may belabour him, and rain kicks upon his ribs, and shout 'erree' in true Arab fashion, but you will get nothing beyond a grunt out of him. Everyone knows the tendency which a monotony of motion, combined with a monotony of sound, has to set some old tune or rhyme vibrating through your brain. As I jogged along, listening dreamily to the perpetual clank, clank of the horse's hoofs, I found myself ringing changes and stringing rhymes to Browning's refrain of 'As I

ride, as I ride:' no doubt influenced by the similarity between my position and that of the rider 'Through the Metidja to Abd-el-Kader.' They will do as well as any other description of a ride through the Kabylie.

As I ride, as I ride
On the lonely Atlas side,
With a howling Arab guide,
As I ride, as I ride—
My patience sorely tried
In this sweltering noontide,
Parched and dried, broiled and fried,
As I ride, as I ride.

As I ride, as I ride,
I take no sort of pride
In the steed that I bestride,
As I ride, as I ride.
He is spavined, he's wall-eyed;
If he died, hanged if I'd
Give sixpence for his hide,
As I ride, as I ride.

As I ride, as I ride,
No saddle is supplied
His dorsal ridge to hide,
As I ride, as I ride;
And it threatens to divide
The wretch that sits astride,
And I'm galled and scarified
As I ride, as I ride.

As I ride, as I ride,
I can't say I confide
In his shambling, scrambling stride,
As I ride, as I ride;

The path is far from wide,
There's a precipice beside
For a slide if he shied,
As I ride, as I ride.

But towards evening matters began to mend. As we rose higher and got more into the heart of the mountains, the air became sensibly cooler, and the scenery improved rapidly. We entered upon a region where the dwarf-palm and the evergreen oak grew thick, and where the trailers of the wild vine hung over the rocks. The slopes of the mountains became so steep and the valleys so deep, that the path no longer went up hill and down dale, but wound round the brows or ran along the topmost ridges; and so tortuous and eccentric are these Kabyle ravines, that many a time we found ourselves working back to within almost a stone's-throw of the spot where we had been a good half-hour before, but cut off from it by a mighty chasm hundreds of feet deep. In fact, from any height that gives a bird's-eye view, the country looks as if it had been honeycombed and channelled by some huge worm. On each summit and each of the headlands formed by the windings of these glens, there stands a quaint red-tiled village—the houses huddled close together, and holding on to one another to keep themselves from toppling over, like children on a stile; and round each village, where the slope of the ground admits of it, are rich gardens and orchards, and groves of fig and olive

trees. Our halt for the first night was at a village called Bouni, where there is a caravanserai: not one of the hospitable sort, like that of El-Kantra, but one that offers a roof and nothing else to the traveller. At first I meant to lodge with the leading man of the village and see Kabylè life; but I soon found that my experiences of Kabyle life were likely to be more varied than I had anticipated, and by no means derived from the sense of seeing alone. I know my host thought I suspected him of some design on my life or property, but I could not explain to him that, though I had every confidence in him, I felt there were inmates of his house who thirsted for my blood, and on whose account I preferred to sleep on the cool, clean, hard asphalt floor of the caravanserai.

The next day's journey took us to Beni Mansour, in the valley of the Sahel. We had a choice of two routes: the one, by the gorge of the Biban, or the 'Gates,'—the *Portes de fer*, as the French call it, which Shaw, in that tall old folio of his, the biggest book of travels ever printed, describes as 'cut into the fashion of a door-case six or seven foot wide.' The other is a mountain path, which the same old traveller calls 'a dangerous pass and the reverse of the Beeban. For here the road lyeth upon a narrow ridge, with deep valleys and precipices on each side, where the least deviation from the beaten path must expose the traveller to the almost inevitable danger of his life.' The

latter is the more direct, and, as may be imagined, the most striking route, though the Doctor has enormously exaggerated its perils. His description is, however, substantially correct. All day we did travel along narrow ridges, with deep valleys and precipices on each side, every now and then getting on the left a glimpse of the mysteries of that wild defile which contains the Bibans, until, towards evening, the broad valley of the Sahel suddenly burst on the view, far down below us. Except that the Sahel valley is richer in colour and more beautiful altogether, this view struck me as being very like that which one gets of the Rhone valley above Martigny, when descending from the St. Bernard. The cluster of villages composing Beni Mansour, perched on a hill in the middle of the valley, represents Sion; and the magnificent many-peaked chain of the Djurdjura behind forms no ignoble substitute for the craggy outline of the Diablerets. One tall conical summit in particular filled me with admiration, and in my scrambling Arabic I remarked to my guide that it was 'Djebel kebeer bezzef'—a very good-sized mountain. 'Dam-good' was the prompt and astounding reply. 'Hallo!' thought I; 'so the schoolmaster is abroad, and our little English colloquialisms are appreciated even here.' But presently I found the poor fellow was equally innocent of English and profanity, and only meant to say, though he pronounced

it rather strongly, that the name of the mountain was 'Tamgoot.'

At Beni Mansour, where there is a barrack, but no hotel, inn, auberge, cabaret, or accommodation of any sort for travellers, I was lodged and boarded by a friendly baker, who, besides his bakehouse, kept a sort of café-billiard for the troops quartered there; and as there was no spare bed in the house, I slept in great comfort on the billiard-table. The next day was spent in an attempt at ascending the Tamgoot, which was only partially successful owing to a series of mistakes about the route and distance; and on the next I started for the passage of the Djurdjura to Fort Napoleon. There are several passes over the chain of Djurdjura, the principal one being the Col de Chellatta, by which the French army passed in 1857. That by which I crossed is called, if I mistake not, the Col de Tirourda. It lies more to west, and over the higher part of the range. The view from the summit seemed to me one of the most magnificent I had ever looked on from a mountain height. To the south lay the rugged but rich country of the Beni Abbes, through which I had travelled two days before, scored with ravines and bristling with peaks, and separated from the mountain on which I stood by the broad valley of the Sahel. To the north the eye ranged over the country of the Zouaouas, a region even wilder and grander—a mad jumble of mountains and valleys, stretching away to the Mediterranean;

and between the two, like the dorsal ridge of some fossil monster, rose the Djurdjura, with many an outcropping peak that rivalled the Matterhorn or the Aiguille de Dru for boldness of outline. There was not much spare time for studying the landscape, glorious as it was, for the young Kabyle whose mule I had hired to carry my baggage had not been punctual, and we were at least two hours later than we ought to have been. Just at the top of the pass we overtook a Kabyle and his mule on their way to one of the villages on the north side; and when he heard we were bound for Fort Napoleon—Souk el Arba, as the natives still call it—he held up his hands in astonishment and expressed an opinion that it was not to be reached that night. I told my companion to ask him how many hours he reckoned it to the fort, and then transpired the astonishing fact that the Kabyle mountaineer knows nothing of the division of time into hours. To give him a new idea, I showed him my watch, and tried to explain that a certain relation existed between the position of its hands and the position of the sun; but I am afraid the only idea he carried away was, that by some occult means I kept a portion of the solar system in my waistcoat pocket. In company we commenced the descent. And such a descent!—the Gemmi, compared with it, is a gentle incline; and all hands were told off to hold on to the tails of the mules, and act as human drags, to keep them from plunging into the basin down

the side of which we had to go. Arrived at the bottom, we had to mount again by a similar path, and so on, the only bits of level walking we enjoyed being along narrow ridges, or narrower shelves worn into the substance of the mountain. How the fig and olive trees grow on such slopes, it is hard to say. They must be the very acrobats of vegetable life. But grow they do, and bring forth fruit abundantly, for every village we passed had its row of oil-jars—each big enough to contain the whole forty thieves—and its cleverly-constructed oil-press, standing in the middle, like the stocks in an old English village; and every villager we met had the hood of his bernous stuffed with dried figs, of which, with a jolly bonhomie, he would generally thrust a handful into our hands. Except these, I had eaten nothing since a light breakfast at five; but there was no time to stop and dine, so I had to perform a feat which, from its difficulty on a mountain-path, I can recommend to Blondin as likely to be effective on the tight rope—that of opening and finishing a tin of sardines, while walking at a brisk pace. So hour after hour we tramped onwards, until night came down upon us, and the oak thickets which had afforded us a friendly shade all day, became our worst enemies, and robbed us of the little light the stars gave. And then, hour after hour, we groped along in the dark, sometimes running bolt against a village where we got a hint as to the road, sometimes dropping suddenly upon a ghostly

band of white-robed Kabyles, who advised us to turn back and put up at their village. But I was determined, *coûte qui coûte*, to get to Fort Napoleon and enjoy a good supper and a good bed. At last the mule-driver gave in; he could do no more, he was 'morto,' and besides, he did not know the way. I got him to mount the mule, and at the next village we secured a local guide for a franc. With him stalking on ahead, and looking, through the black night, like some benevolent spectre who had taken us in charge, we got on much better, though Fort Napoleon still seemed wofully distant. Again and again I made my companion ask how much farther we had to go; and again and again came the heartbreaking answer, 'Il dit que la route est grande,' i. e. long. At last, far away, a clear-blown trumpet rang out through the night-air, followed by the brassy roll of a drum. I never thought I should come to bless that vile sound. It was the 'retraite,' and we were approaching the Fort. Half an hour afterwards we halted inside its gates, and in five minutes the clock struck ten, and the gate was shut for the night. Had we been five minutes later, we must have slept on the mountain, or gone on to some Kabyle village. We had left Beni Mansour at six in the morning, so that we had been sixteen hours on the tramp, literally without a single halt, and that over very curious ground. I went out the next morning and strolled back a couple of miles over our route of the

preceding night; and when I saw the kind of path we travelled over in the dark, I congratulated myself on having got so well out of it.

A ride of a few hours brought me to Tiziouzou, where roads and diligences begin once more, and a drive across the famous plain of the Metidja to Algiers.

There is no need here for a description of Algiers. Which of Mr. Mudie's subscribers is not familiar with the old pirate city, its triangular mass of white flat-roofed houses piled up against the hill-side, its mole and harbour, its Bab-el-oued and Bab-azoun and Casbah? But even if there were anything new to be said about Algiers, I doubt if I could say it. After the Sahara and the Atlas, mud-built towns, and Kabyle villages—even the quaint, steep, narrow streets of Algiers, with their open shops and bazaars, and crowds of Turks, Jews, Moors, and Arabs, seemed almost tame, commonplace and respectable, and instead of 'doing' the city, I found myself rather given to lounging at Valentin's café, and studying in the papers the doings of Europe for the last two months. It was some time, however, before I could settle to even that pursuit. As I sat in the balcony, I had in view, far away across the bay, the Kabyle mountains, the scenes of many a pleasant ramble. I could almost detect the notch in their outline through which I had crossed a few days back, and many a time I turned from the present state of Europe to the recollections of the past holiday.

CHAPTER VIII.

THE DJEBEL AURESS.

THERE may be something soothing to the weary traveller and refreshing to the thirsty soul in the name of Aïn Beïda, 'the White Fountain;' but the little town itself is not calculated to excite any pleasant emotions. Even Mark Tapley would admit there was some credit in being jolly there, after a turn or two in 'the long unlovely street' of which it mainly consists. Like every other Algerian military station, where the town is merely an appendage to the barracks, it has an appearance of premature decay, something like that melancholy mixture of newness and shabbiness we see in a cheap hat after its first wetting. Houses become dilapidated before the roof is put on; young streets that are unfinished at one end are in ruins at the other; nothing seems to be flourishing except the cafés and dram-shops; and even they have a pallid, blotchy, ricketty look about them, as if the quantity of absinthe consumed in them was beginning to tell on their constitutions. Nor is the surrounding landscape more cheerful. There is not a tree within the visible horizon, except a few weeping willows—no willow could help weeping in such

a spot—about the springs from which the town takes its name; nothing but bare plains or brown sand-hills, only redeemed from absolute lifelessness by an occasional flock of curlews or plovers. And yet, before the blight of Islam fell upon them, these plains were among the richest, most fertile, and populous of Numidia. They formed the fattest part of the dominions Masinissa won from Syphax, and Jugurtha from Adherbal. Under the Empire they were thickly dotted with wealthy and luxurious cities, and leagues of aqueducts husbanded and distributed the waters of the Atlas that now sink uselessly into the porous soil, or spread out into stagnant lakes. This is no mere conjecture. History, it is true, has either forgotten the very names of these cities, or lost all clue to their identification; even the position of Zama, and its battle-field, is still a matter of doubt. But at every step there are abundant evidences, more eloquent and trustworthy than written record, of the wealth, luxury, and importance of this tract and its continuation, the valley of the Mejerdah, down to Utica and Carthage. Some dozen of ruined cities lie within view from the summit of the mountain of Sidi Raïs: in fact, in travelling through the country now held by the Arab tribes of the Haractah and Nememshah, you can hardly go a mile in any direction without coming on ruins of some sort. Sometimes it will be a mere heap of dislocated masonry; sometimes a solitary, weather-beaten pillar, standing up in the

plain like one of those posts which his patriotic Grace of Argyll erected plentifully on his estates; sometimes a few broken, prostrate columns, half buried among the parched vegetation of the plain, on which you stumble suddenly, scaring the lizards who are comforting their chilly stomachs against the warm marble, and sending them off in a flourish of slim tails, to come back presently and peep at you, with curious eyes, through the shattered foliage of a Corinthian capital. No amount of Colosseums on Italian soil could bear half such powerful testimony to the ancient greatness of Rome as these stones that strew the Numidian plains. They show the proud unhesitating way in which the Roman colonist took possession of foreign lands, as if they were his birthright. We feel a just pride in the feats of colonisation performed by our age: we have constructed a modified Europe in many a remote region of the earth; but the Roman fairly transplanted Rome, and its ideas, luxury, and civilisation. His was no makeshift way of going to work: he lodged his gods in marble, and beautified the streets of his African city with triumphal arches as sumptuous as if they had been meant for the adornment of the Mistress of the World.

Another peculiarity of Aïn Beïda is that it is as hard to get into as Vicksburg, and as hard to get out of as London. The commonest mode of getting into it is by a public vehicle which crawls (for it cannot by any means be said to run) from Constantina about three

times a month; leaves that city with all the solemnity of an emigrant ship or an exploring expedition; takes nearly two days to do about sixty miles, and breaks down, on an average, once in every three trips. To get out of Aïn Beïda there is nothing for it but to hire a mule either through the Bureau Arabe, or else through the Bash-hammar — literally 'head-jackass' — of the town, a functionary who is a sort of broker or agent in all matters of mule-hire and transport. The first is the course to be adopted if you have any friends in office. Its advantages are that you get at once a mule and an Arab to take you to any destination at the moderate Government tariff of three francs a day; the theory being, I suppose, that you are in some undefined way connected with the Government. The French officials will, I am bound to say, almost always grant this favour even to an alien tourist; but unless I happened to know some of them personally, I generally preferred the more expensive but more independent plan of hiring on 'my own hook.' This is not such a simple affair as the corresponding transaction with Europeans would be. After arranging with Mr. Bash-hammar about the price (generally from three to five times the Government rate), the quantity of baggage to be carried, the hour of starting, &c., you fancy there is an end of the matter. An hour or two afterwards there comes an Arab who introduces himself as the master of the mule that is to have the honour of carrying you, and

in that capacity demands money of you. It is of no use objecting that money is not reasonably due till the contract is completed; that it is not your way of doing business. It is his way: it is the Arab way. Without something in hand, he will not consider it a bargain, and you will see no Arab or mule in the morning. Later on in the day, as you are sauntering about, or meditating, or sketching, as the case may be, you become aware of another Arab, a shade dirtier and more ill-looking, who appears to have no other business that morning except following you about when on the move, and sitting staring at you when at rest. If of a nervous temperament, and unused to Arab ways, you will perhaps fancy this argues a desire to indulge in the luxury of Christian murder; or, if at all vain of your skill, that it is your art that has captivated the simple barbarian. But he cares as little for your blood as for your sketches. What he wants, as you presently find out, is 'barley for the mule.' If there is one thing better calculated than another to raise a Briton's indignation, it is an attempt to 'do' him; and this looks so like one, that you feel it your duty to express yourself strongly. But facts which in Europe would be held conclusive of imposition seem to amount to nothing here. The present applicant does not in the least dispute the former payment, and admits that the recipient is in some way connected with the mule; but he alleges that he himself is the person really interested in the welfare of the animal, and that

unless he is fed to-night he cannot possibly carry you to-morrow. At last, to get rid of him, you give him a franc or so, with a feeling that you have been humbugged, which comes upon you still stronger in the morning, when you find the mule waiting in charge of a third Arab, the dirtiest and most ill-looking of the set. To do him justice, I have never known him to repudiate the disbursements already made. He takes the balance due without a murmur, and I can only account for the conspiracy by the supposition that it is a relic of the old Turkish times, when good faith was rare, and life uncertain, and it was always desirable to get as much as possible out of a man before he broke his word, or was prevented from keeping it by some such accident as assassination.

Although, in quitting Aïn Beïda, I believed I was taking leave of civilisation for some time, nevertheless, the above preliminaries being completed, it was with great satisfaction I turned my back on the dreary little town, and started for the Grand Atlas. The route I proposed to myself was by the French post of Krenchela into the mountains and glens of the Auress, thence through the country of the wild tribe of the Nememshah to the ancient city of Tebessa, and thence across the Tunisian frontier by the way of Keff and the Valley of the Mejerdah to Tunis and Carthage. The latter part of the plan I was subsequently obliged to relinquish in consequence of the disturbed state of the

border. After a five or six hours' ride from Aïn Beïda, the scenery began to improve. As the plain rose gradually to meet the mountains, the broad lake of El Tarf came in view, stretching away on the right hand; and as the valleys opened out, the many-headed Auress* appeared, ridge above ridge, with the long hog-backed outline of the Djebel Chellia, the most elevated point in the Atlas, east of Morocco, towering high above the rest.

As we made our mid-day halt for rest and refreshment, by the side of one of the little streams which now began to intersect the track at intervals, we had a foretaste of the land in store for us in the orthodox, patriarchal form of mighty clusters of grapes, as luscious if not as large as those the spies brought down to the thirsty Israelities in Paran. A troop of mountaineers came by, just in the nick of time, laden with the small, sweet, green grapes of the Atlas, and we forestalled the fruit-market at Aïn Beïda to some extent.

Krenchela was once the important Roman station of Bagasis. Now it consists of two or three huts and a half-built barrack; and the inhabitants are the lieutenant in command, a sub-lieutenant, a dozen soldiers or so, and the baker in ordinary to the garrison. As this last seemed the most natural person to apply to, I took up my quarters in his hut, and then

* Auress—properly 'Aouras.' اوراس

went to call on the commandant, to seek assistance and advice for my further rambles. If I had been an old schoolfellow, or a college friend, or a comrade unexpectedly turning up, I could not have received a more cordial welcome than that of my friend, as I may now call him, Lieutenant de Maeght. Before entering into any other business, he laid it down as a preliminary that I was engaged to dine with him. That point settled, he arranged about a guide and mule, and then took me round the ruins of the old Roman town. These are not as extensive as many others in the neighbourhood, but they show that Krenchela must have been a place of considérable importance. From its position on the south-eastern slope of the Auress, nearly four thousand feet above the sea-level, it was no doubt used as a kind of outpost to hold in check the wild tribes of the mountains, and protect or warn the cities of the plain below against any sudden attack.

I had come fully prepared for some three weeks of the very roughest kind of travel. Except at Tebessa, I did not expect to get any better shelter than a mountaineer's hut or an Arab tent, or any better food than kous-kous, dates, sour milk, and an occasional stringy fowl; and here I was at the very outset dining cosily, and drinking sound claret in most agreeable society. But this was not all. While we were at dinner, my kind host had quietly sent for my baggage; and when, reluctantly enough, I was about to betake myself to the

baker's hut, where I had spread my plaid, with the portmanteau for a pillow, he told me I was going wrong, showed the way into one of his own rooms, where he had made up for me unquestionably the best bed I had seen since leaving Europe, and wound up with an apology for the roughness of mountain quarters.

My first excursion from Krenchela was into the country of the Kabyle tribe of the Amamra, crossing over the mountain which rises behind the barracks. The view from the summit of this was one of the most striking I had ever seen in Algeria. On the side by which we ascended, the south-eastern, there lay the great plain which forms the summer quarters of the nomadic Saharan tribe of the Nememshah. Out of this plain, to the south, there rises a curiously-shaped mountain, with a flat top and precipitous sides, marked on the map and known by the natives as the Djebel Djaafa. This, I suspect, is the mountain on which Dr. Shaw places the citadel of the fierce tribe of the Neardee, and which he, and Gibbon who follows him, believe to have been the Geminian rock mentioned by Procopius. At any rate, as far as I could make out, there is nothing else in the neighbourhood to answer to the description. On the north we looked down on the lake of El Tarf and the plain of the Haractah, and on the left the sombre grey mass of the Djebel Chellia rose up out of a maze of rugged mountains and richly-wooded valleys. The geography of the Auress group

has a certain similarity to that of the Mont Blanc range. It is a mountain mass of very much the same extent,* though more irregular, and very inferior in height, the highest point being only 8,250 feet above the sea level. The Chellia corresponds in position with Mont Blanc itself, and from it the inferior mountains run north-east and south-west. In the place of the Rhone valley and the Lake of Geneva, there is the plain of the Haractah and the Lake of El Tarf, while the Sahara stands in the place of Piedmont. The situation of Krenchela would correspond with that of the inn on the Col de Balme, and the summit on which we stood might be held to represent the Aiguille Verte in its height and position, as compared with the culminating point of the group. If the Mount Atlas of the ancient myths be considered to have ever had any substantial geographical existence, there can be little doubt that this was its place. As is generally the case in a question of ancient geography, the clearest and most serviceable description is that of Herodotus, from which Rawlinson (who does not seem to be aware of the extent to which his opinion is supported by geographical and physical facts) is led to place the Atlas in 'South-eastern Algeria.' The other candidates are a hypothetical mountain, somewhere near Timbuctoo, the great

* According to Procopius, it is three long days' journey in circuit, which is just about the minimum of time in which the tour of Mont Blanc could be made.

snowy range near Morocco and the Peak of Teneriffe. With respect to the first, in addition to the slight objection that there is no mountain at all there, it may be urged that the Atlas of Herodotus is placed by him distinctly on the line of that 'sand-ridge,' described as running across Africa from Thebes to the Straits of Gibraltar, which is now known as the Sahara, and not in Central Africa. As to the second, the distance from Thebes is too great by one-third, besides which he disclaims any knowledge of that part of Africa; and as to the Peak of Teneriffe, surely Herodotus was not the man to omit all mention of the trifling fact that it rose out of an island two hundred miles out to sea, not to speak of the difficulty that it does not answer in any one respect, except that of commanding appearance, to the description he gives. The Auress, on the other hand, complies accurately with nearly every one of the conditions he has laid down. Between Thebes and the Atlas he enumerates five hills of salt, separated each from the other by an interval of ten days' journey, all situated in the 'ridge of sand,' and therefore in a line nearly parallel with the coast. The first and second of these can be identified beyond a doubt, and the second is at Augela, which is in round numbers about seven hundred miles from Thebes. The fifth salt hill, therefore, ought to be somewhat more than a thousand miles west of Augela; and at just about that distance, and in that direction, we find the great salt mountain

(rather than hill) of El Outaia—the most extensive and remarkable mass of rock-salt in North Africa. Near the fifth salt hill there is, says Herodotus, a mountain called Atlas, 'said to be so lofty that its summits can never be seen, for the clouds never quit them summer or winter.' Now El Outaia stands at the south-western corner of the group of the Auress, which from its height and position is naturally a cloudy mountain tract. As the hot southerly and westerly winds from the Sahara sweep over it, they become so cooled that their condensed moisture may generally be seen hanging about the tops of the mountains. So far the description of Herodotus fits closely enough. The only difficulty is, that it is applicable rather to a single isolated mountain than to a knot or group of summits, as the Auress is. It is true he speaks of summits in the plural; but he also speaks of it as *a* mountain, στεινὸν καὶ κυκλοτερὲς. But then we must recollect that mountain exploration was a branch of science not much cultivated in ancient times, and that his informants had doubtless only got a distant view of the mass, and derived most of their ideas about it from hearsay. It is pretty certain that his sources of information were the accounts of the caravan traders who travelled between Egypt and Carthage, through Fezzan and the eastern Sahara. This idea gathers strength from the fact that he confesses his ignorance of the countries and peoples lying to the west of the lake Tritonis, at which point the caravans would have

turned northwards for Carthage, though up to that point he is most minute in his details. If, as is most probable, the route of the caravans was the same as the more modern one indicated by Dr. Shaw,* it would pass within fifteen or twenty miles of the Auress; and one can easily understand a much less lofty and imposing group of mountains producing a powerful effect on the imaginations of men who for fifty days had been surrounded by the unbroken horizon of the Sahara. There is, besides, another point to be taken into consideration. Through all the legends touching Mount Atlas, together with the idea of loftiness and ruggedness, there runs the apparently incompatible idea of great fertility and richness. A portion of the wealth of the old King Atlas lay in his gardens, and the Hesperides, his daughters or his nieces, held their garden and raised their golden apples under him. May not all this be due to the grateful fancy of some thirsty desert traveller, to whom the grapes and melons of the Auress valleys came as welcome as they did to me? The valley of Ourten, for one, is wild and beautiful, and fruitful enough to justify the jealousy of a dragon. There, shut in by steep mountain sides, with woods and terraces rising tier above tier,

> Droops the trailer from the crag,
> Droops the heavy-blossomed bower,
> Hangs the heavy-fruited tree.

* Shaw's *Travels in Barbary, &c.* Ed. 1737, p. 212.

All round the little colony of Kabyle huts, at the upper end, the water-melons and pumpkins strew the ground as if they were the natural, uncultivated productions of the soil. Great snaky vines creep and writhe and twine wherever anything can be done in the climbing way; and the very breeze that rustles among the trees and shrubs is scented like a whiff from an unsophisticated 'Atkinson's.' Lower down the valley opens out into a succession of green slopes and knolls, through which a dozen little streams gurgle pleasantly, half hidden in the rich grass. Near its mouth there is a hot spring which bubbles up among the ruins of what was no doubt a 'badhaus,' much frequented by the hypochondriac colonists of the plain below. These hills have perhaps echoed many a time the jollity of a Roman picnic, and the strains of the band of the third legion, 'by the kind permission of the commanding officer.' At present the baths are used chiefly by certain valetudinarian frogs of extremely unhealthy appearance, who, as they sat on the stones with their heads above the steaming waters, reminded me forcibly of the invalids one sees stewing in the tanks at Leukerbad. There is another fact connected with the valley of Ourten which must not be forgotten. In all Barbary, perhaps in all Africa, there is not such a spot for lions—at least on no other spot in the world have so many been killed. At the head of the valley there is a noble old mulberry tree, under which I regaled with

much satisfaction on grapes, thick milk, and melons brought by the friendly natives. This tree, according to Jules Gérard, 'has seen five lions bite the dust under its shade.' Here it was that his unfortunate follower, Amar, came by his death from the charge of a wounded lion; and here, or near here, as I have been told, M. Chassin, the Nimrod of Batna, killed four lions in one night, two of them right and left shots. I had a pressing invitation from one of the natives to pass the night up at his home, for the purpose of hearing the lion roar; but I was not at that time bitten with the lion-hunting mania, which came on afterwards under more favourable circumstances; and the certainty of feeling the smaller creatures which abound in a Kabyle hut, while there was only a chance of hearing the king of beasts, made me decline.*

* Dr. Shaw, Bruce, and others, have said a good deal about a certain fair-haired, blue-eyed tribe inhabiting the glens of the Auress. While on the spot I made many enquiries on this subject, but nobody seemed to be aware of the existence anywhere of such a *tribe*. Individuals with decidedly blonde complexions were occasionally to be met with; even among the Nememshah I saw a young man who, if washed, might almost have passed for a Scandinavian. But such cases seemed scarcely so common as in the Grande Kabylie, and it is an open question whether they may not be due to the temperate climate of an elevated mountain region rather than to a trace of Vandal blood.

The above is a lion of the Auress as drawn in my pocket-book by a native artist.

CHAPTER IX.

TEBESSA AND THE BORDER.

FOR the journey across the country of the Nememshah I was furnished by M. de Maeght with a mule and Arab, and a letter in Arabic to the kaïd of the western division of the tribe, requesting and requiring him, in passport style, to allow me to pass freely without let or hindrance, and to afford me every assistance and protection of which I might stand in need. On reaching the tents, which lay six or seven miles to the east of Krenchela, I found that the kaïd was absent on Government business. This was a serious matter to me, for on him I depended for a guide and horse, and, what was of even more importance, a letter to his colleague the kaïd of the eastern Nememshahs, and at first I thought of returning to Krenchela; but even this retreat out of the difficulty was cut off by the abrupt departure of my guide and mule while I was trying to make myself understood. If these people had been as lawless as Shaw describes them, or as they seem to have been when Bruce travelled among them, the position of a solitary Christian tourist left sitting amongst his effects in the middle of one of their camps would not have been an

over-pleasant one: but I must say I found them very civil and good-natured.* About the horse and guide there was no difficulty; but how to procure the letter I did not see. Fortunately, however, I had in my portmanteau an Arabic phrase-book, full of dialogues of the sort that take place only in phrase-books, and out of this, with infinite labour, I built up a sentence expressive of a desire for a letter addressed to the Kaïd Mohammed Gabah, setting forth my necessities. It was no doubt inferior in grammar, idiom, and pronunciation even to the German one hears on a Rhine steamboat, but it answered its purpose; and there being a gentleman present who possessed the accomplishment of writing, he was set to work to produce a 'briya,' which he did with much sucking of the pencil and twisting of his mouth. I am afraid, from his appearance and that of the document, it was not a creditable passport, and have never since been able to shake off a conviction that it was woefully ill spelt. No doubt, with a view to uniformity, a guide and a horse were selected for me whose shabbiness harmonised with that of the letter. Of the horse I must say he was a good one to go; but he was a very unprepossessing steed to look at. The man was a tall elderly Arab, in a tattered bernous, nearly black from age, and under-clothing which could

* Jules Gérard thinks these Nememshah are descendants of the ancient Numidians. They have, however, completely adopted the manners, habits, and customs of the conquering Bedouin.

not have been changed since the French invasion. His personal uncleanliness was probably referable to his piety, for which, as well as appetite, I afterwards found he was remarkable. Among the Arabs dirt and sound religious principles generally go together. When from conviction or laziness an Arab makes up his mind to adopt the calling of marabout, or holy man, he devotes himself to the acquirement of foreign matter on his garments and person, until he has attained a sort of degree of D.D., or deuced dirty; after which no one doubts his claims to godliness, the old proverb on that head not being of Oriental origin. Such a man to pray as this Arab I never met. Not content with the five prayers which are generally held sufficient by good Mussulmans, he used to retire and go through his prostrations whenever a halt gave him an opportunity; and on the march, as he sat behind me on the horse, *more Africano*, he told his beads or moaned a dreary ditty, which, from its monotony, I argued to be a low-church Mahommedan hymn. His capacity for food was equal to his devotion. At every cluster of tents we passed he stopped to gorge dates and milk, during which process I generally sat and exchanged ideas with the master of the tent; while, over the top of the curtain that shuts off the women's compartment, his females inspected me much in the manner Messrs. Dodson and Fogg's clerks examined Mr. Pickwick, which Sam Weller described as 'twigging.' On one occasion, halting in the plain for purposes of refresh-

ment, I took out a small gigot which I had among the provisions for the journey; but finding that, owing to the heat, it had become so high as to be utterly unapproachable, I flung it away as far as I could, and fell back upon sardines and saucisson. Shortly afterwards, *en route*, I thought the odour of sanctity about my friend seemed to be more powerful than usual, and to have a curious gamey flavour which I could not at first account for. Looking over my shoulder, I found him gnawing at my discarded mutton, which he had managed to secrete while at his prayers, with an appetite wholly unaffected by its advanced state of decomposition, and it required the very strongest language to make him throw it away.

All day long we jogged on over a dead level plain just like a piece of the Sahara. In fact, this plain of the Nememshahs belongs geographically and physically to the Sahara, and though it lies at a much greater elevation, presents very much the same features. To the south it seemed boundless; but to the east, ahead of us, there ran a range of low hills which, judging by the map, I took to be the division between the French and Tunisian territories. It was not till sunset that I found out my mistake, and that we had another day's journey before us to reach the tents of the kaïd. It is consistent with the established religion of the country that an error of this sort does not put one out at all in travelling in Southern Algeria. If you do not reach

your destination to-night, you will to-morrow, or the day after, or next week; and you plod on trustfully, free from all the cares and anxieties about lost time, missed trains and full inns, which belong to travel in poor, old, fussy Europe. The last cluster of tents you come to before nightfall is your inn for the time being, and your taking up your quarters there is just as much a matter of course as if you were under the sign of the 'Adler,' or 'Couronne,' or 'Marquis of Granby.' If the accommodation is simple, at any rate there is no bill in the morning, for no one with the slightest respect for 'institutions' will think of tampering with the fine old Arab custom of unquestioning hospitality by offering payment. Of course one does not altogether like appropriating the barley, kous-kous, and tent-room of a poor, ragged Bedouin in this cavalier way; and for this reason I always carried a few good, serviceable English knives, razors, and scissors, one of which compensated the master of the tent fourfold for any loss sustained through the appetites of horse or guide, without in the least injuring his fine principles. Shortly after sunset we were fairly settled for the night in a small camp of some half-dozen tents. The cattle were driven in, the camels were hobbled, the horses tethered, and evening prayers got over; and I had the pleasure of making tea for a select circle of nomads, some of whom showed as strong a partiality for the beverage as Dr. Johnson. With the first grey of daylight the camp was astir

again, and the scene, as I saw it through the tent-door, was very suggestive of desert-life. Above the hills to the east the sky was becoming tinged with faint yellow, and the light just touched the backs of the sheep and goats, and the heads and humps of the recumbent camels; and in among them the white figures of the Arabs were hard at work at the morning prayer, now standing with uplifted hands and faces turned eastwards, now down on the knees, bowing the forehead to the earth. As soon as my friend had done his devotions, we started with a volley of 'beslamas' from our host, and took the track for the hills at a brisk pace, for the morning was chilly. We had hardly gone a couple of hundred yards, when the guide stopped, and with more excitement than I could have believed him capable of, pointing to the path, exclaimed, 'El Sayd!' (the lion). There could be no mistake about it: there, in the dust of the path, was the impression of the broad cushions of the lion's foot, so fresh that it was evident he had passed on his way to the hills only a few hours before us—

Majestic, stalking o'er the printed sand.

I then recollected having been woke up for a moment during the night by the dogs ceasing to bark, just as the miller wakes when the mill stops. As the scent or voice of the lion always silences the Arab dog, no doubt

the noble beast was at that moment passing close to our camp. He had most likely supped elsewhere, or we should have heard more of him. We traced the prints for about a mile along our path, and then they turned off to the north, and we saw no more of them, but they led to some conversation (after a fashion) on the subject of lions. I fancied that in leaving the Auress I had left the lion country, but my guide informed me they were 'Whew! bezzef bezzef' (very abundant) in the hills to the north and before us; and then I remembered we were not very far from the country of the Ouled Sidi Boogannim, whom Bruce describes as lion-eaters by custom, and among whom he once dined on lion. Dr. Shaw was aware of the fact that lions were eaten in Barbary; but the Oxford philosophers made him cut out all allusion to it in his travels, on the ground that it was impossible as an inversion of the natural order of things, lions being made to eat men, and not *vice versâ*. Nevertheless the custom obtains to this day, and not among the Arabs only. The day of my arrival at Tebessa, some Arabs brought in a fine beast they had killed; and next morning we breakfasted on lion at the auberge where I put up. I cannot, however, recommend the animal to the attention of the Acclimatization Society as a future source of food. The flesh is like poor, stringy, strong-flavoured veal. In rough quarters I have eaten worse

meat certainly; but unless there is a great falling off in mutton, I do not think breeding lions for the market would pay.*

We crossed the hills without seeing anything more of 'el Said,' and shortly after noon came in sight of the camp of the Kaïd Mohammed Gabah; and a strange sight it was. In the middle of a vast, brown plain, stretching away seemingly to infinity on the south, and bounded on the east by the blue mountains of Tunis, there rose a huge, grey pile, the ruins of some Roman temple. At its foot bubbled up a spring, spreading out into a pool, round which groups of Arab women with their pitchers were clustered; and close by was the camp, a Bedouin town of some hundred and fifty tents. After two days of semi-savage life, dusty and grimy, and besides coming in such a questionable shape on such a sorry steed, and with such a follower, I naturally felt some trepidation on entering into polite society, more especially when I found myself in the presence of a portly, well-favoured gentleman who, like Dogberry, had "everything handsome about him," and whom I understood to be the kaïd. He, however, received me with that courtesy and

* Lions are not the only game to be found on these plains. On the following day I saw the bag made by two guns in a very few hours. Besides red-legged partridges, it included ducks of four or five varieties, two or three herons of different species, an ibis, and a couple of brace of the poule de Carthage, or little bustard, a bird which on the table combines the virtues of the pheasant, the grouse, and the partridge.

grave politeness which is characteristic of the Arab gentleman; and in a few minutes I found myself installed in a tent, on a soft carpet, drinking divine coffee brought by a jolly little nigger-boy. Then there came dates, and sweet milk, and other refreshments, until I was in a state of indolence and enjoyment incompatible with further exertion. I had had an idea of going on to Tebessa that evening, and I might easily have reached it by nightfall; but I felt that my lines had fallen in pleasant places, that it was good for me to be here, as well in respect of personal comfort as for the sake of studying manners, so I determined to stay where I was till the morrow. There is a luck which attends laziness, as indeed there ought to be: honest industry has quite enough of the success of this world, and is sufficiently conceited about it; while honest indolence accepts humbly and thankfully such bits of good fortune as come to her without saying a word about her own deserts. Shortly after I had made up my mind, I caught sight of the scarlet bernous of a spahi, and being at that time engaged in an animated discussion with the kaïd's son, and sadly in want of an interpreter, I hailed the wearer, trusting to his understanding, at any rate, a few words of French. From him I learned the cause of the bustle going on in the camp. The Commandant Supérieur of the district was out with his staff and escort on one of his tours of inspection, and was expected to arrive that evening. The Chef du Bureau

Arabe at Tebessa, Captain Senaud, to whom I had a letter of introduction, was with him, so that, instead of riding into the city a solitary and unrecognised vagabond, I now had the prospect of making a becoming entrance in company with the authorities. Towards sunset a cloud of dust far away to the south announced the approach of 'el Kommandant,' and shortly afterwards there appeared a line of horsemen stretching almost across the plain. The officers and a body of Chasseurs d'Afrique and spahis formed the centre. The wings were composed of Arab cavaliers, one of whom would every now and then dart out, his long gun-barrel glittering in the sun as he flourished it over his head, gallop madly down the line, fire, and then wheeling, pass round to the rear, and resume his place. As they rode by into camp, I could see that the apparition of a grey shooting-jacket and wide-awake among these Bedouin tents and bernoused Arabs puzzled the new-comers somewhat. Tourists are not familiar objects in these regions—probably since Bruce a specimen of the breed had not been observed—and, as I afterwards found, there were numerous ingenious theories started to account for the phenomenon, the most popular one being that I was an escaped prisoner from over the Tunisian border. The mystery was, however, soon cleared up, and the immediate result of the letter to Captain Senaud was a cordial invitation to join the Commandant and officers at dinner. Here, for

the second time, I found myself suddenly in the midst of luxury where I had made up my mind to the hardest fare. The dinner was 'à l'Arabe,' but it was evident that the kaïd's chef had been put on his mettle. How many of the eight recognised varieties of kous-kous made their appearance I cannot say: it came with broiled mutton, with fowl, with raisins in every possible shape; not the greasy, dingy-coloured, strong-flavoured kous-kous of ordinary Arab life, but a delicate snowy mess like farinaceous whitebait. There were, besides, strange Mahometan meats and curious confections of pomegranate seeds; in fact, it was like a dinner out of the 'Arabian Nights,' a book in which eating—queer, but good—is always going on; and to tone down the prevailing Orientalism of the repast there came from the travelling-stores of the Commandant the liquid ruby of the Côte d'Or, and—wonder of wonders!—here on the border of the Sahara, under the shelter of a Bedouin tent, a bottle of Madeira to wind up with!

It may be that this sort of thing opens the heart of man; and certainly it is a suspicious coincidence that that enthusiastic style of recommendation of nature which insists on your admiring the loveliness of the Vale of Pwmdwdlwm, or entreats you not to leave the neighbourhood without exploring the soft scenery of the Schlammer-thal, is nowhere found in such force as in the Travellers' Book, at some inn where the trout and cutlets are good, the wines neat, and the weary traveller

sleeps the sleep of the unbitten. But whether it was because of external beauty or of internal contentment, the scene, as I strolled back to my 'house of hair,' seemed strangely beautiful. The nomad town had gone to rest, and the spaces between the tents were filled with lines of horses and mules, nodding drowsily over their tethers, and clusters of grave sententious-looking camels meditating calmly in the moonlight. The only creatures astir were the dogs, sniffing restlessly from tent to tent, and saluting one another with a snap and a snarl as they met in the course of their investigations. Far away to the south, the vast plain that, under the uncompromising matter-of-fact glare of noon, showed as a broad, barren, tawny tract, gleamed like a calm summer sea; and the old grey Roman ruins, touched with the soft silver light, lost all their mid-day grimness, and seemed to look down upon us with a gentle melancholy. For fifteen centuries the little play of conquerors and conquered had been played under their walls, and the teetotum had turned up all its colours in succession. Roman, Vandal, Saracen, Turk, Frenchman, had each pitched his camp, and set up his standard, and blown his trumpet, and believed that his was the colour to win the game.

Meditations to this effect were interrupted by a friendly hail calling on me to join in the refreshment of Cognac à l'eau. It came from the tent of the sous-officiers, with some of whom I had fraternised earlier in

the afternoon, and over the beverage just named we discussed the problem of French colonisation in Africa, until it became clearly necessary to retire to our respective carpets. Mine had been spread in a neighbouring tent, and under it, by the way, there was found in the morning an uncommonly fine scorpion.

With the first streak of daylight the bugle-call 'to boot and saddle' rang out, and in a moment the whole camp buzzed like an upset bee-hive. My traps, packed on a mule, accompanied the baggage of the troop, and for my own transport I had as pretty a little Arab mare, in spite of her unkempt looks, as one could wish to ride. I should have been glad to exchange some of her good points for a saddle, bridle, and stirrups; but, unfortunately, saddles were at a premium that morning. Every Arab who owned one was in it already, primed and loaded for the fantasia in honour of the Commandant; and a piece of carpet girthed with a rope, and a camel's-hair halter, were all the ephippia available at the moment. I had of late ridden too many scores of miles without saddle or stirrups to be particular on this point, as far as personal comfort went; but I felt that I could not decently show in the van of the cavalcade, and so, with a modesty suitable to my equipage, fell into the rear, beside one of the non-commissioned officers. I was not long left in this obscurity, however, for Captain Senaud coming up presently, I had to go on to the front with him. The face of the kaïd when he rode up to bid farewell

to his guests was a thing to remember. No doubt, the lodge-keeper at Lord Bateman's was puzzled when the young lady who had arrived 'with a horse and saddle,' passed through the gates on her way home in 'a coach and three,' as the ballad describes; but what was that to the puzzle before the worthy kaïd? Here was an individual who had come up out of the wilderness under suspicious circumstances and in disreputable company, now riding away by the side of el Kommandant, the representative of the Emperor—may Allah prolong his life! It was evident from his countenance he could make neither head nor tail of it. Nevertheless, the position was not one in which it was safe to give way to a feeling of pride, for the fall said inevitably to succeed indulgence in that weakness would have been a very serious affair here. At first we rode slowly along, while the Arabs kept up an incessant fantasia, dashing all over the plain in the enjoyment of the 'lab el baroot,' or 'powder-play,' as they call it, though from the whine that followed many of the reports it was clear that the guns were not always loaded with powder only. But towards noon, coming in sight of the encampment at which we were to halt for breakfast, the Commandant gave the word for a gallop. Now, a gallop before breakfast is a very good thing—good for the appetite, for the spirits, and the digestive organs; but its joys are very much modified on a steed bare-backed, or nearly so, over rough ground, without bridle

or stirrups, and with the encumbrance of a heavy rifle, which were the conditions under which I had to perform. I shuddered as I thought of a 'spill.' Independently of the disgrace—and here, of course, I was the representative of English horsemanship—close behind there clattered a body of Chasseurs d'Afrique and spahis, and behind them again a small squadron of Bedouins, who could not have helped riding over me in case of a mistake. And yet such an accident did not seem at all improbable. The wretched carpet on which I sat began to shift about in a most uncomfortable manner; and as to pulling up with the substitute for bit and bridle I held, I might as well have tried to stop the Falls of Niagara, or a speech of Mr. Roebuck's. There was nothing for it except to sit like wax; and my lively little mare, who evidently considered the whole thing to have been got up for her special enjoyment, treated the extra pressure of the knees as a hint to go it, and did go it, at such a pace that at last I came in among the astonished Arabs at our halting-place several lengths ahead of the troop.

After breakfast I had a fresh mount, for the little mare had to be sent back to her owner. This time it was a wiry grey of the ordinary stamp, with the saddle, bridle, and all the trappings of a Bedouin cavalier. I had often wished to ride in a genuine Arab saddle, but fruition is seldom so pleasant as anticipation. To a European, an Arab saddle is, until he gets used to it,

little better than an instrument of torture. You sit upon something that resembles the convex or under side of a butcher's tray, with an affair like a dustman's shovel bound in Morocco leather against the small of your back, and another in front threatening your stomach. The stirrups are so short that your legs are bent into a right angle; and, as the point from which they hang is six or eight inches farther back than in our saddles, the body is thrown most uncomfortably forward, and the shin grated severely by the stirrup-iron. In fact, the genuine Bedouin or tented Arab may be distinguished from his sedentary brother of the Tell and the town by the callosity on his shin bone, produced by the eye of his stirrup.* Half an hour of this perfectly satisfied my curiosity about the seat of an Arab horseman, and I tried to Europeanise matters as much as possible by lengthening the stirrups. This in an Arab saddle is no easy affair, the stirrup-leather being simply a thong passed several times through the eye of the stirrup and a loop at the side of the saddle, and then secured by a hard knot; and while about the operation I had a strong proof of the docility and common-sense of the Arab horse. Wishing to make the alteration, I edged a little out into the plain and pulled up, which, as we were going at a brisk canter, my impetuous steed obviously thought a most unreasonable

* *Vide* General Daumas on *The Horses of the Sahara and the Manners of the Desert.*

proceeding. But the moment the sensible beast found out what I was at, instead of fidgeting and capering as an English horse with a troop of cavalry clattering by would have been sure to do, he stood like a rock, merely looking round now and then, as much as to say, 'Do make haste, there's a good fellow; we shall never catch them up unless you look sharp.'

All the morning we had been riding over a bare, tawny plain, rising gradually to the north, where it was bounded by a low range of barren hills. Suddenly —as suddenly almost as when, obedient to the whistle, the dungeon beneath the castle moat where Tenor beguiles captivity with song, slides away, and the spectator is in the mountain home of Barytone and his brigands, carousing freely over tin goblets—the scene shifted, and we had before us a landscape as different as if in five seconds we had travelled five hundred miles. Almost under our very feet, as though the ground had opened, lay a deep gorge, wild enough for Salvator Rosa, and beautiful enough for Turner, its sides clothed wherever tree could grow with all the varied foliage of the Atlas—

> Majestic woods of every vigorous green,
> Stage above stage, high waving o'er the hills;

and coming like a cool drink to eyes wearied with the yellow glare of the desert tracks behind. Looking out through the jaws of the ravine, far below we saw a plain bounded by blue mountains, at the foot of which was a

white spot in a circlet of green. This was the venerable town of Tebessa and its gardens. One other charm of this happy valley it would be sheer ingratitude to pass over. Descending by a path which I should rather not try on the back of any animal but an Arab horse or an Alpine mule, we came, after many a zig-zag, to a little platform, at one side of which, in a recess in the rock and under the shade of a noble wild fig-tree, there bubbled a spring of clear cold water. Of course there was a halt: in a moment every saddle was empty (the Arab horse will stand for hours if the end of the bridle is thrown on the ground), and from the Commandant to the trumpeter every one drank, as only men can drink who have ridden for hours over the parched plains of North Africa.

Externally Tebessa resembles one of those dear, old, unfashionable Rhenish towns, like Boppart and Baccharach, which steamer, train, and tourist mostly pass without notice. It is surrounded by a massive old wall of weather-stained reddish-grey stone, broken at regular intervals by square projecting towers. Internally it differs little from other Arab towns, being for the most part a collection of narrow lanes of white, flat-topped, windowless houses, varied occasionally by rows of shops like open cupboards, except in the south-western angle, where a space has been cleared for an esplanade, barracks, and the quarters of the Commandant. The chief lions are the Temple of Minerva, or of Jupiter

according to some antiquarians, a graceful building crowned with a hideous, whitewashed, modern dome, and used by the French as a church, and a beautiful four-sided triumphal arch, generally called the Arch of Caracalla, though it would seem Septimius Severus and Marcus Aurelius Severus have just as good claims

ROMAN ARCHWAY.

to it. This last is embedded in the wall, and forms the north gate—a fact which, taken in connection with the existence of extensive ruins, including those of the Basilica, outside the town, shows that the present walls form no part of the city as it flourished under the early emperors, but belong to the shrunken and impoverished Theveste of later times, probably

of the troublous times of the Vandals. In spite of its former importance, its site on classic ground, and its great antiquity, Theveste, or Tipasa, or Tebessa, has no particular place in history—unless it should happen to be the Thubuscum mentioned by Tacitus —except as being the spot where the eunuch Solomon was defeated and slain by the Moors in the sixth century. The antiquarian, however, will find enough to interest him in the noble relics of the Roman empire that abound in and around the city; and, whatever his tastes may be, the traveller who cannot find a charm in its beautiful gardens is a man to be pitied. On a smaller and humbler scale, they bring back to mind the pictures of the gardens of Damascus, drawn by 'Eöthen' and Warburton. They are not gardens in the European sense of the word, which carries with it notions of gravel-walks, box-edgings, trim flower-beds, and fruit-trees flattened against brick walls. Passing out through the gates, you plunge into a maze of narrow shady lanes winding through a wilderness of luxuriant foliage. On every side hang fat figs bursting through their velvet jackets, clusters of grapes, crimson and golden pomegranates glowing among the dark-green leaves like Chinese lanterns. Below, the ground is strewn with melons, cucumbers, and gourds. The air is impregnated with fruity perfumes; and a pleasant murmur of running waters, babbling among the trees or trickling over the worn stones of some old Roman cause-

way, falls doubly grateful upon the ear as through the leaves you catch a glimpse of yellow plains and thirsty rocks quivering in the noontide heat. 'Gardens wherein rivers flow' are among the rewards the Koran promises for a life of prayer, faith, and charity. It is in a scene like this you feel the strength of the inducement; and the voice of the muezzin from the distant minaret, exhorting you to virtuous meditation—which, when heard over the busy hum of the streets of Algiers, or Constantina, or Bona, is rather like the cry of a man selling shrimps from a high tower—has a certain solemnity and significance among these tranquil shades. Like the music of the carillon in an old Flemish town, it harmonises with the 'religion of the place,' and you feel, as Sir Thomas Browne says, that 'there is something in it of divinity more than the ear discovers.'

The muezzin, however, can be a great nuisance, if, as I did at Tebessa, you lodge near the mosque. It is provoking when in the cool of the morning, after a restless, feverish night, as nights often are in this latitude, you have at last succeeded in getting up something like a sound sleep, to be told that prayer is better than that luxury, which is the substance of the long wail from the minaret that rouses you up so effectually. Perhaps it was from having superior opportunities for observation, but I thought that Tebessa seemed to be kept more tightly to its religious duties and to have more 'regular mosque-goers' than Algerian towns in

general. It certainly is less influenced in its ways by French example, and is highly conservative in its Orientalism. The gardener still waters his garden of herbs with his foot, two women grinding at the mill may be seen in every second doorway, and any morning the ox that treadeth out the corn will be found at work outside the walls.

The scenery in the neighbourhood of Tebessa is very fine. The town is surrounded by mountains of the most fantastic shapes; and those to the south and east are everywhere furrowed by wild ravines similar to that by which we descended into the plain. In one of these, the gorge of Rfana, a Roman road, called by the Arabs the 'Trik el careta' (the track of the chariot), leads to the quarries out of which the city was built; and the grooves cut in the rock for the wheels of the stone-waggons are as distinct as they were fifteen hundred years ago. To the east of the town, overlooking the frontier of Tunis, there is a remarkable conical mountain—the 'Pain de sucre' the French call it—commanding a country as rich in historical associations as any landscape on the face of the globe. You look down upon the battle-fields of Cæsar, and Scipio, and Hannibal. Somewhere among those hills to the right lies Zama, where the fate of Carthage was decided; close under the foot of this mountain Jugurtha retreated before Metellus; and a few leagues to the south, '*inter ingentes solitudines*,' as Sallust says,

are the ruins of his strongholds, Thala and Capsa. This sort of excursion is not altogether the same kind of thing as a visit to Waterloo or an ascent of the Flégère. Rambling about the environs of Tebessa, or anywhere along the Tunisian frontier, is always attended with a certain amount of risk of being 'potted' by some lurking Arab, who hopes to secure property in this world and position in the next by knocking over a stray Christian; and the hunter after the picturesque will do well to bear in mind Warburton's hint about carrying arms in Bedouin society. The fact is, the border Arabs are a very 'bad lot;' they are lawless and fanatical, recognising the authority of neither Emperor nor Bey, and shifting from Tunisian to French territory, and *vice versâ*, according to the movements of the tax-collectors. They often prowl so close to Tebessa, that the Commandant does not allow the officers to go on shooting expeditions except in sufficiently large parties.

Owing to this state of things, and yielding to the advice I received from all sides, I gave up the idea of proceeding to Tunis by land. With an escort, if I could have got one, I might have managed it safely enough; but this seemed to be rather too much of a good thing. When Bruce crossed the frontier here, nearly a century ago, he had a company of twenty-one men, ten of them spahis, and all well armed; and when Dr. Davis followed in his footsteps a couple of years back, he was accom-

panied by a strong party, and, in spite of the Bey's passport, he seems to have had to fight his way near Hydra, just over the border. A journey of this kind seemed to be rather beyond the limits of a vacation tour; and I reluctantly turned my steps northwards to the coast by the way of Guelma.

CHAPTER X.

A RAMBLE WITH THE LION-HUNTERS.

SPORTSMEN who, like Nick Bottom, hold lions to be 'wildfowl,' or in other words, creatures made to be shot, ought by all means to try Algeria before they go farther afield in quest of that species of game. As compared with the Cape, Natal, North-western India, or any other habitat of the *felis leo*, it has the recommendation of being easily reached; so much so that a man who has dined on Monday in London can, if he likes, by making the best use of express trains and quick steamers, put himself in a position to be dined on by a lion in Africa on the following Friday evening. But the great advantage of its situation is that he does not stand committed to the enterprise to any great extent; and if, as is by no means unlikely, he finds the sport rather trying to his patience, and gets very tired of it at the end of a fortnight or so, there is no great harm done, or vast amount of time or money thrown away. If he can condescend to become a mere tourist he has a most delightful country ready to his hand; if not, he can go straight home, and say he has only been to Paris. His chances of success, too, are probably just as good

as anywhere else. Jules Gérard, a few years ago, estimated the lions he left behind him on French territory at about two hundred, but the number has no doubt increased since then. Strange as it may seem—and it is in its way a curiosity of civilisation—one of the effects of introducing European ideas into Africa has been the encouragement of lions. Before the French occupation, the Arabs thought nothing of setting fire to the woods and destroying leagues of forest at a time, whereby many deserving lions were suddenly rendered homeless and destitute. The French, very properly considering the timber to be an important element in the natural wealth of the country, set their faces against this practice, and by means of their 'gardes forestiers' have effectually put a stop to it. Consequently, these animals have now a far better time of it. The struggle for existence is less severe, and, as any student of Darwin would anticipate, the leonine population has increased in proportion, not counting the additions to it by such burnt-out lions from Tunis and Morocco as prefer emigration to becoming chargeable to the parish. They are not, however, distributed over the whole of Algeria. At least four-fifths are settled in the province of Constantina, either on the northern slopes of the Auress or in the mountainous region which lies in the north-eastern corner, between the coast and the frontier of Tunis. There is no greater voluptuary in the matter of scenery than the lion. He seems always to fix his lair

in the most picturesque spot he can find; and if in the mountains of Northern Algeria you come upon a particularly lovely valley, where nature has done all she could in the way of wood, water, and crag—in fact, just the place an æsthetically-minded hermit would select for his retreat—you may be sure it is a favourite haunt of some old 'father of robbers,' as the Arabs would call him. Some tangled thicket near its head is his permanent residence, or at least his hunting-box, and some commanding summit his watch-tower, where he lounges at sunset, observing the movements of the wild boars stealing across the glades of the wood beneath him, or the cattle trooping home to the douars on the plain below, and making his arrangements for supper accordingly. No part of North Africa offers greater inducements to an animal gifted with these tastes than that beautiful mountain country lying around Guelma, Bona, and Philippeville, once the diocess of St. Augustine, and now the district where Christianity (chiefly in connection with agriculture) flourishes most satisfactorily on the soil of Barbary. Here French colonization approaches nearer to a success than in any other tract of the same extent in Algeria. There is more ground under cultivation, the settlements lie thicker, and the towns and villages look as if they did some business on their own account, instead of existing merely to supply the military with coffee, tobacco, and billiards. Very nearly the same natural advantages which have attracted the colonist

make it a desirable residence for the lion. Being mountainous and lying near the coast, it is well watered and fertile. There is an abundance of thick luxuriant cover for him and the wild boars his prey, and plenty of streams for him to drink at; for being a thirsty soul, he can no more enjoy life without water than a member of a Band of Hope. He and the colonists on the whole get on pretty well together. Indeed, I have heard inhabitants, native as well as European, say that the extinction of the lion is by no means to be desired, as he keeps down the numbers of the wild boars, who do an incalculable amount of damage to the fields and gardens in their neighbourhood, and in this way quite makes up for the occasional cow or mule he takes by way of a change of diet. His services to society, however, are not sufficiently marked to secure him a perfect immunity at the hands of man. Sometimes, when from a scarcity of wild pork or sheer laziness he has been led to levy too heavy a tax on the flocks and herds of his neighbours, the Arabs prepare a pitfall for him, as their predecessors, according to Oppian, used to do, or turning out in force, surround the thicket to which he has been tracked, and 'with wild halloo and brutal noise,' drive him into the open, where they fire away at him from a safe distance until he drops. Horace Vernet's well-known picture, representing a group of horsemen performing Astleyan feats with the assistance of a couple of raging lions, is, I fear, only the theatrical version of an Arab lion-hunt.

Such things may possibly take place in the province of Oran, but in that of Constantina the very nature of the ground where the animals are to be found would make such a mode of attack impossible. But his most formidable enemy is the solitary hunter, who lies in wait for him, seeking the bubble reputation even in the lion's mouth, and stimulated by the fact that a good skin will fetch two or three hundred francs. The proper time is a little after sunset, or a little before dawn, and the place a spot commanding some one of the paths by which the lion leaves or returns to his lair. The Arabs are rather fond of perching in trees, or planting themselves in holes fortified with timber and stone, for which they can hardly be blamed, when their clumsy ineffective guns are taken into consideration; but with the better armed European it is generally a point of honour to meet his antagonist on more nearly equal terms, and he seldom seeks for any protection beyond that of the bush in or behind which he takes his post.

Riding into the town of Guelma, I had as little intention of joining in one of these expeditions as of giving a reading of Shakspeare, or a performance on the tight-rope. But, such is the force of circumstances, before many hours had passed I found myself issuing from the opposite gate pledged to a lion-hunt, in company with the most indefatigable hunter of the town. This unexpected result was altogether due to the eloquence of M. C——, of Guelma, who put the joys

and excitement of lion-hunting in such a fascinating light that resistance was useless. My ambition in the sporting line had not soared above a quiet evening at the wild boars which abound in the neighbourhood; but he suggested, by way of amendment, that I should include the nobler game, especially as a favourable opportunity then offered. He was, it appeared, on the point of starting in quest of a certain 'grand vieux lion,' of which he had just received intelligence, and goodnaturedly proposed that I should accompany him. The offer was certainly a tempting one. The supreme good luck of bagging a lion was, it is true, rather too much for a reasonable tourist to expect; but at least there was a chance of seeing one, and it seemed almost a shame to leave a lion country without making an attempt at an interview with the king of the brute creation; not as he appears at Regent's Park, a sullen captive, leading a life of 'long mechanic pacings to and fro,' but an independent monarch, free and strong among his native hills. Even if he did not show, it was at any rate a new experience in sporting life, and from that point of view worth trying. On the other hand, there were one or two trifling objections, which, however, were easily got over by M. C——. It was true I had no experience in this kind of sport, but then nobody had when he made his first attempt; if I had never tried shooting at night, it did not make much difference, as the moon was at the full, and the light would be nearly as good

as at noonday; and to my suggestion that a badly-placed shot, or even a miss, might be a more serious affair in an encounter with a lion, than in one with a wild boar, I got at once the encouraging reply, that a lion was a far better and bigger mark than a boar, and came a great deal closer to the shooter. There was no answering arguments like these, and we started without further delay; but I reserved to myself the right of withholding my fire in the presence of the enemy in case it seemed more prudent to do so, and made a mental vow not to risk any snap shot, or pull trigger, unless I saw my way to drilling a hole into his heart or brain. I did not think it necessary to communicate this resolution to my companion, and perhaps it was just as well, for his opinion of me, that I kept it close, for I soon found that he did not by any means share Jules Gérard's views of the seriousness of engaging with a lion. Like other professed lion-hunters that I met in Algeria, he apparently thought as little of the business as of a day's partridge-shooting; at any rate, he never treated it as the kill-or-be-killed sort of affair which some writers represent it. Perhaps it is only fair to warn the reader before he goes any farther that neither on this nor on the two or three subsequent occasions when I tried my luck, had I any opportunity of judging for myself upon this subject. If he is looking out for thrilling incidents and hair-breadth escapes he had better stop here, for, in spite of a perseverance worthy of a better cause, I was not rewarded

with even a glimpse of a lion. But I have no right to complain. It cost Gérard six hundred nights spent in the forest to meet with five-and-twenty lions; so that until a man has watched every night for three weeks without getting a shot, he cannot fairly consider himself unfortunate; and, indeed, from what I have seen of the sport, I suspect that for success in lion-hunting there is far more need of the patience of Job than of the pluck of Jules Gérard. I do not, however, consider the time to have been wasted, for these expeditions produced many a delightful ramble through the beautiful forest and mountain scenery of north-eastern Algeria, and many a pleasant bivouac in the woods, and gave an insight into the haunts, habits, and customs of the lion, panther, wild boar, and other beasts, such as no Buffon, Cuvier, or zoological garden could give.

We left Guelma by what will, perhaps, in the fulness of time, be the road to Constantina. Our destination was the very spot Jules Gérard recommends as a good one for the sport, the western slope of the Mahouna Mountain,—'Le jardin de plaisance des lions,' as he calls it. If one could believe that the lions were influenced by a love of the picturesque, this pleasure-garden of theirs would reflect the highest credit on their good taste. From its base up to the twin peaks which, from their fancied resemblance to the pommel and cantle of an Arab saddle, have given the mountain the name of Serdj-el-Aouda, 'The Mare's Saddle,' this side

of the Mahouna is clothed with a thick wood or rather bush of wild olive, jujube, arbutus, mastic—here called lentisk—and the other shrubs that flourish so luxuriantly on the northern spurs of the Atlas. Matted and interlaced, their branches make an impenetrable roof of varied foliage, and their stems closely set form a labyrinth of gloomy caverns stretching for miles along the mountain side, and only broken here and there by a ravine, down which a streamlet tumbles in miniature cascades. Below lies the broad rich vale where the waters of the Cherf and Zenati unite to form the Seybouse, and set out on a roundabout journey to the Gulf of Bona; and opposite is a weird-looking nook, shut in by lofty mountains, containing the Hammam Meskoutin, or 'Enchanted Baths,' whose waters—kept hot, the Arabs say, by genii under the orders of King Solomon—have the power of attracting the fashion and the infirmities of the province to this wild region.

Along the road there were spots whose interest was more closely connected with the business we had in hand. First we crossed the ravine where Gérard killed his first lion. Then we came to the place where my companion had wounded one recently; and it was a satisfaction to perceive that his statement about the lions coming close enough was fully borne out in this case. His post was on the side of the road, in a lentisk bush, the centre of which he had cut out with his knife, so as to make a sort of nest, and the lion when

fired at was not five yards from the muzzle of the rifle. Nevertheless, the brute was only slightly wounded, and got off. Above us on the mountain side he showed me the spot supposed to be the favourite lair of the old beast, the object of our expedition, who, I gathered, had been a well-known character in the neighbourhood for —if I do not mistake—nearly half a century. Gérard, Chassin, almost every lion-hunter in Algeria, had tried to compass his death. M. C—— himself had made several attempts to get a shot. But, hitherto, all stratagems had been unsuccessful. Long observation of mankind had invested him with a preternatural cunning; and the Arabs believed he was under the immediate protection of Shietan. As far as I could make out, however, there was nothing in his behaviour to warrant the latter theory. As lions go, he seemed to be a well-conducted animal, not doing wanton mischief to the flocks and herds about him, but helping himself now and then with the moderation that became his years and sagacity. In spite of his wariness, M. C—— had hopes of encountering him this time. He had been frequently observed of late descending to drink at the river hard by, and it had been ascertained there were two paths he especially affected. We were to take post, one on each of these. 'If you want wild boars,' said M. C——, 'you could not be in a better place; and as for the lion, if he comes this side to-night, one or other of us will

probably see him, and your chance will be as good as mine.' Presently we came to a solitary house, an auberge for the refreshment of travellers bound to Constantina or Medjez-Amar: and my companion left me while he went to fetch his horse. He returned leading an animal, which only by courtesy could be described as a specimen of horse-flesh, for there was not enough of that substance about him to base an observation upon, not to say swear by. He bore at best the same relation to a horse that an old hulk undergoing the process of breaking up does to a ship: by his ribs, framework, and general outline, you could see that he had been a horse once; but it seemed a misuse of the present tense to speak of him as being one still. He certainly had his points, but they were not of the sort which usually find favour with good judges; and being especially prominent and abundant about the region of the back, they held out no promise of ease to the rider. How anybody, on a fine autumn evening, not too warm, could prefer such a mount to walking, I was at a loss to imagine, and I suppose I looked as if I was, for M. C—— hastened to explain that his matchless steed was devoted to a nobler service than that of bearing burdens. To be a lure for lions was the mission of his declining days, and he had been purchased for that purpose for the sum of two-and-sixpence English money. His coat, white with age, made him a conspicuous object at night; and his

efficiency as a bait was increased by a chronic cough, which signalled his whereabouts with the regularity of a minute-gun. This explanation lent an unexpected interest to the animal; but it also suggested a destitution among the lions of the Mahouna for which I was unprepared. If natural history had given any reason for believing that these creatures were partial to broiled bones, I could have understood the temptation. A lion who had previously dined, might certainly have made a light and digestible supper off M. C——'s ancient courser. But that he should regard him as materials for a serious meal, could only be attributed to a great scarcity of leonine food in these parts: and then arose the question, might not a lion with an appetite up to the mark of such a scarecrow, look with favour upon a moderately succulent Christian?

We were now joined by the landlord of the auberge, and a young man in a costume half-Zouave, half-civilian, which made him look like a transpontine pirate of the N. T. Hicks' period. This proved to be a person of whom I had already heard a good deal, Constant Cheret, christened by the Algerian press 'Le Nouveau Gérard,' from his brilliant successes as a lion-killer. There was very little of the ideal lion-hunter in his appearance. Instead of a brawny Hercules fit 'to whip his own weight in wild cats,' I saw a little fellow not more than five feet three or four in height, slight but well built, and looking as if

he might have ridden for the Derby. The only thing about him that could have indicated his anomalous calling, was a piercing black eye, that seemed able to penetrate the darkest night, and a certain intentness about the expression of his rather handsome features, as if he were trying to catch some low distant sound. Cheret's history curiously illustrated the fascinations of lion-hunting. One night, three or four years ago, he was alone in the woods, watching for a shot at a tiger-cat, or mungoose, or some such small game, when an enormous head suddenly protruded itself through the brushwood, within a dozen feet of him, and he found himself, for the first time in his life, face to face with a lion. For weapon, all he had was one of those cheap single-barrelled guns that are exported in such numbers from France. However, he did not hesitate, but aiming between the two glowing eyeballs before him, pulled the trigger. Fortune, favouring the brave, so far interfered with the usual action of colonial firearms and ammunition, that the piece went off and burst not; and as it had been held straight and steady, Cheret, when the smoke cleared away, found a fine old lion lying dead at his feet. From that time forth the chase of the mungoose knew him no more. Having procured a more trustworthy weapon, he devoted himself to the destruction of lions with the energy of an enthusiast; and at the time I met him, had scored some half-dozen victories, fairly entitling him to write 'Cheret, tueur de

lions,' which—and it was his only vanity—he invariably did, in 'bill, warrant, quittance, or obligation.' He was then a private in the 3rd Zouaves, but enjoying, apparently, indefinite leave of absence, granted (I believe by the Emperor) to enable him to pursue a mission beneficial to the colony, and calculated to keep up the prestige of the French with the natives.

It must not be supposed that all his triumphs were as easy as his first, or that he staked nothing against the reputation he won. A short time before we met, he had an adventure which is a good illustration of the chances of lion-hunting. He was sitting one night among the scrub just over the path usually taken by a certain lion, when he suddenly heard close behind him the deep-breathing sound which almost always gives notice of the lion's approach; and turning round, perceived him fairly marching down on him. 'Never fire at a lion standing on higher ground than your own,' is one of the fundamental maxims of the craft; but here there was no choice; another step, and the brute would have been upon him. All he could do was to let fly rapidly, and then 'duck.' The lion, as a wounded lion generally does, sprang forward, and clearing Cheret, rolled down the hill-side below him, growling and swearing like a huge cat. As it would have been madness to attempt anything more that night, Cheret got away quietly and went home. Next morning there was plenty of blood, but no lion to

be found. A fortnight afterwards, however, he discovered the carcass; but decomposition and vultures had left nothing worth preserving except the teeth, one of which he gave me as a keepsake when we parted.

It turned out that Cheret's object was the same as ours. He was on his way to Neçhmeya, a village on the road to Bona, but, tempted by the fineness of the night, and the news he had heard, determined to halt here for the philanthropic purpose of hunting the veteran of the Mahouna. There was a pot-au-feu simmering pleasantly on the hearth when we entered; and as internal contentment is held to steady the nerves and improve the shooting, it was agreed to sup before we started. The fare may have been commonplace, but the conversation was remarkable. Its subject was what might have been expected from the circumstances and the company; for even mine host was something of a lion-slayer, and often of an evening strolled out into the forest behind the house, in a quiet, unpretending way, to look for a shot, as a man might who had a rabbit-warren handy. But what chiefly struck me was that they appeared to be on terms of intimate acquaintance with all the lions of the neighbourhood. It seemed as though there was not a lion within a radius of fifty miles that was not personally known to some one of the trio. His appearance, his habits, his consort, his family, and the period at which the next little addition to it might be expected —all these were detailed with a freedom and minuteness

that would have made the London correspondent of a country newspaper jealous. I noticed, too, that this intimacy with the king of beasts produced a familiarity of expression in speaking of him, calculated to upset notions derived from 'Peter Parley's Tales about Lions' and other scientific works on the subject. It was always as 'Le vieux coquin de Penthièvre,' or 'Ce drôle que j'ai blessé l'année dernière à Ain Mokra,' or by some similar playful if not contemptuous title that he was referred to. The anecdotes also that were related, did not, upon the whole, increase one's respect for the animal; and some of them attributed to him a low sort of humour, not hitherto noticed by naturalists, and a taste for practical joking, quite incompatible with true dignity. It is, it would appear, a pleasant practice of the lion to present himself suddenly to timid travellers in his dominions, and accompany them for some distance, growling and showing his teeth, until they are reduced to a state of extreme terror; which end attained, he leaves them uninjured. Stories of this sort are very common in the Algerian newspapers, and my companions mentioned several instances of the same kind, but always on hearsay evidence. I could see that they placed little faith in such yarns, which, I suspect, are merely expansions of what is almost an everyday occurrence in these parts—that of simply meeting a lion on the high road. It is true that he does show a preference for beaten roads and paths—not so much, I imagine,

from 'ce mépris qu'il professe pour l'homme,' as Gérard says, but because he finds them easier and more comfortable walking than the tangled thickets at each side of him. It may be very well for the panther, a slim, snake-like creature; but for the lion, a burly, broad-chested beast, with a carcass like a bullock's, it can be no easy matter to bore a passage through the dense jungle that covers the hill-sides of the Atlas; and no doubt, like the coffee-drinker in the ballad, 'he blesses the generous Frenchman' for increasing his comfort so materially. Some of the roads in north-eastern Algeria have become celebrated for these rencontres; that between Bona and Guelma so much so, that I could not suggest a better plan for a tourist who is anxious to see one of these animals in his natural state, than to travel back and forwards for a week in the banquette of the night diligence which plies between these towns. But I never heard anyone who has actually met a lion in the path charge him with any greater breach of politeness than staring hard, which, after all, is a privilege that has been long ago conceded to the cat tribe, even in the presence of royalty.

'There was a good deal of that kind of conversation which, in the vulgar tongue, is called 'chaff,' turning chiefly upon sporting misadventures. One of the party had been unfortunate enough to shoot a cow in mistake for a lion—a crime which I can now understand, as I was very near becoming an accessory to a repetition of

it a short time afterwards; and an allusion to that accident led to the query, 'Who shot the camel?' This, it appeared, referred to a mishap of recent occurrence. The hunter in question had been applied to by some Arabs to rid them of a lion in their neighbourhood that was becoming rather troublesome. He was sitting in the tent of the sheikh over the evening kous-kous, when an Arab rushed in with the news that he had just seen the lion lying under a tree not far off. Of course he immediately repaired to the spot, and, approaching stealthily, perceived a huge tawny animal, with a massive hairy head. There could be no doubt about it. There he was indolently lounging, getting up his appetite, and debating in his own mind whether he should have a cow, or only a sheep and a goat, to follow. His flank, too, was temptingly exposed; so our chasseur, crawling nearer, deftly planted a ball in the proper spot, just behind the shoulder. A hideous bellow answered the shot, and a fine camel struggled out into the moonlight, and presently died in uncouth convulsions. The head and neck had been concealed by the trunk of the tree, and it was the hump, with its fringe of shaggy hair, that had represented the head and mane of the lion. To complete the tragedy, the murdered beast proved to be the property of the Arab who had given the information.

A considerable part of the evening was taken up in giving me that instruction of which, as a neophyte, I

stood in need. The first and most important of the rules laid down was that you should always, if possible, allow the lion to pass before firing at him. The object of doing so is twofold: in the first place, the most vulnerable spot in the carcass—that just behind the shoulder—is exposed. At night, and when the animal is in motion, firing at the head is looked upon as rather hazardous, the brain of a lion being but a small target, and bullets apt to flatten or glance off harmlessly, owing to the shape and hardness of the skull. On the other hand, a ball behind the shoulder, passing through the region of the heart and lungs, has, as Sir Lucius O'Trigger says, a double chance; 'for if it misses a vital part on the right side, it will be very hard if it don't succeed on the left,' not counting the chance of its breaking the opposite shoulder, and, at any rate, crippling the enemy. The second advantage gained by waiting till he has passed is that the bound which the lion makes on feeling himself wounded carries him away from, instead of towards you; in which case, to use Gérard's expression, if he has but two seconds of life left in him it is all over with you. The next point of importance is to keep perfectly still, especially after administering the first pill, so as to avoid calling attention to your whereabouts, either by sound or motion; and not to be in too great a hurry about exhibiting your second dose. There is little danger of the lion coming on the hunter unawares; for even if he does not roar, his heavy breathing can always

be heard as he approaches. 'But,' said M. C——, 'it is a positive pleasure to hunt a lion that roars. You can do as you like—smoke your pipe, or lie back and doze. There is no fear of oversleeping yourself; he'll call you.' Notwithstanding its charms, these men—to whom it was a familiar sound, and who feared a lion no more than they feared a cat—one and all confessed that his roar was an awesome thing to hear at close quarters, and that it produced a certain *frissonnement* even on their tried nerves. 'Parole d'honneur,' said the landlord, 'I have felt the house shake when he roared outside there.'

The lion, however, is as capricious with his voice as a leading tenor. In the spring-time, when his fancy lightly turns to thoughts of love, he is by no means chary of his chest notes; but at other seasons he is fitful in his utterances—at one time filling the valleys with echoes, at another snuffing mutely along his mountain path, as if 'unable to perform, on account of a severe cold.' This particular autumn, for instance, it was a matter of general remark that the lions were unusually silent.

'After all,' said M. C——, with the air of a lecturer bringing his discourse to a conclusion, 'the grand secret is TIREZ HARDIMENT.'

This, however, is not all that is required. M. C—— himself had 'tiré hardiment' more than once, without producing any greater effect than a slight wound;

thereby, of course, putting himself in a position of some considerable danger. As we were loading, I thought I discovered the cause. When he found that I put in 2¼ drams of powder, surely not an excessive charge for the Enfield bullet which I used, he expressed strong disapproval, and showed me how he loaded with scarcely half that quantity for a bullet at least a fourth heavier than mine. He reasoned on the fallacious argument, that as he could make good target practice at three hundred mètres with such a charge, it must be powerful enough for any other purpose.

Thus we sat chirping over our cups, like the comrades of the good Grangousier, while the old horse sadly regarded us through the open doorway. The moonlight falling softly on his meagre carcass, cast no shadow worth speaking of; and he might have passed for a spectre come to warn, but too well-mannered to intrude, were it not for the persistent cough which proclaimed him mortal. When at last we made a move, M. C—— declared it was far too late to think of going up the mountain, and that we had better try the plain near the river, and take our chance of such game as might pass. The fact was, I suspect, that although he did not mind letting a green hand like me into the secret of the two paths, and the ambush he had prepared for the patriarch of the Mahouna, he was loath to take so redoubtable a hunter as Cheret into his confidence. Be it a lion or a covey of partridge, when a sportsman has his game

marked down, he naturally objects to seeing it shot under his very nose by a rival. Between the auberge and the river lay a strip of plain, about half a mile wide, dotted with a few trees and patches of brushwood, and two or three plantations of prickly pear. That the lion did occasionally pass this way, we had evidence before we had gone many hundred yards, in the form of the bones of a goat, on which he had supped some nights back. But it was obvious that where there was such a choice of paths, if we saw anything, it would be by the merest chance; and to increase that chance, we spread ourselves out in a line parallel with the river.

They assigned me a post on the right flank, under the shade of a prickly-pear garden, commanding an open space in the brush, and left me with strict injunctions not to sleep. These, to anyone who has never tried the position, will seem wholly unnecessary. They did so to me at first; but long before the vigil was over, I found that a state of drowsiness was by no means so remote as I fancied. For the first hour or so, expectation, excitement, and the novelty of the situation, all combine to keep you well up to the mark; and you sit probing the twilight with patient eye, and straining your ear-drum to extract sound from silence. Time after time some falling leaf sets you a-listening with an intensity that threatens to crack your tympanum; time after time you fancy some bush or rock in your limited landscape does not look exactly as it

did before, and you watch it with a vigilance that makes your eyes run water, until you find that there is nothing new in or about it. But after a while the optic and auditory nerves grow weary of that most wearisome of all labours, striving to do when there is nothing to be done; and then supervenes that state of restlessness under difficulties which men call fidgets. Your nose, stung by the sense of inferiority which the temporary importance of its rivals, the eye and ear, suggests to it, begins to assert itself by itching violently. The privilege of scratching it privately would be cheap at any price; but dare you do it? If a boar or a panther be in the case, it is just possible that the animal having perceived something peculiar about the bush or bank under which you are sitting, is at this moment studying your position with watchful eyes from the depths of some shade which yours cannot penetrate; and the slightest movement on your part will clear up the doubt which is now agitating his mind. With a young and inexperienced lion, perhaps, it does not so much matter; but if it be an old and wary bird, who has been wounded once or twice, he will know the meaning of a crouching figure, with a gun on its knee, and will take another path, so the hunters say; or he will fall upon you and rend you, say the books. Quien sabe? At any rate, scratching your nose is not to be done inconsiderately; but at last, driven to desperation, you stealthily raise your hand (hoping fervently that no body or thing sees you),

and find, when you reach the offending member, that the irritation has suddenly transferred itself to the nape of your neck, or to your spine between your shoulder-blades, or to some other spot, as unattainable in your present position as Spitzbergen. Your nose, having exhausted that line of aggravation, suddenly starts a new idea, and you find that he has taken it into his tip that he wants to sneeze. This, of course, would be fatal; so, with a tweak or two, you bring him to a sense of the situation. No sooner have you put down insurrection in this quarter, than you discover a fresh seat of disturbance in the stone upon which you are sitting. Besides being harder than any geological formation has a right to be, it seems to have suddenly acquired the property of producing knobs, lumps, and protuberances for your especial discomfort; and encouraged by this, and by the fact that they have been at the same angle for some hours, your knees begin to ache, and your lower limbs to show symptoms of the disease known in nursery therapeutics as 'bone in the leg.' Most likely there will be a running accompaniment of mosquitoes all the time; but that being a fair and legitimate annoyance on the part of nature, you have no right to complain. After a couple of hours of this, the period of reaction sets in, bringing with it weariness. Like ear and eye, your mind has now got tired of doing nothing laboriously. You have thought of everything you can think of to kill time, and now you

begin to think that this kind of sport is rather monotonous. At this point a faculty for making Latin verses would stand a man in good stead. If you could only put 'I wish I was with Nancy,' or some other lyric appropriate in sentiment, into Sapphics, the employment would carry you famously through the remainder of your watch. A hardened snuff-taker, too, one seasoned beyond sneezing-point, would have a great advantage. I recommend the acquirement of these two accomplishments to all intending lion-hunters.

I had reached this stage, and was battling hard with drowsiness, when, lifting up my eyes, I beheld in the middle of the clearing before me a wild-boar. How he had got there, I could not make out. I had heard no sound of his approach, nor seen any movement among the surrounding bushes. However, there he was, with a magnificent pair of gleaming white tusks, and looking, in the uncertain moonlight, about as big as a moderate-sized donkey. Four-and-twenty hours before such a sight would have seemed too much happiness to be real, and I have no doubt there would have been a certain tremor of the rifle, and one or two other symptoms of 'hirschfieber,' as German sportsmen call the nervous affection to which tyros at large-game shooting are so liable. But since then I had been in the company of men who rather despised pigs, and whose talk was of lions, and I regarded the boar much as a small boy who has been initiated into

the mystery of perch-fishing regards a stickleback. I don't know that I did not even, in some degree, resent his abrupt appearance as an impudent attempt at producing a sensation. This extra coolness, very likely lost me an uncommonly fine beast. He was not more than fifty yards off, and even if I did not succeed in dropping him scientifically on the spot, I might have given him such a pill as would have enabled us to find him next day; but, influenced by the opinions of the company I had been keeping, I did not think it worth while firing until I was certain of success. Of all animals, a wild-boar is the worst subject for a Fabian policy. Long before he had reached the distance at which I had determined to open on him, his quick eye or nose detected something wrong, and with a loud angry grunt he slid out of sight. There is no other word to describe his disappearance. He did not run, or rush, or bolt, but seemed rather to glide away into the darkness, like a magic-lantern figure. Shortly afterwards the cracking of a twig hard by put me again on the qui vive; but this time my vigilance was thrown away, for it was only Cheret, coming to tell me that they were going to return.

At the auberge nature's sweet restorer behaved with its usual perversity, and took a mean advantage of the fact that I had repelled its advances before. Furthermore, the floor was what Mrs. Gamp would call 'harder than a brick-badge,' and the establishment proved to be,

like Shakspeare's inn at Rochester, 'a most villanous house for fleas.' From a persistent rustling in Cheret's corner, I inferred that he, too, was a sufferer; and he confirmed my opinion in a tone that would have touched the heart of a lioness, even though she were a widow through his means. 'Allons,' said he, 'vaut mieux d'être mangé par le lion que par les puces;' and, taking our guns, we strolled up the hill behind the house. We sauntered and sat under the trees till daylight, but nothing came of it except an invitation from Cheret, who, doubtless thinking it a pity not to encourage a nascent taste for sport, proposed to me to go with him to Nechmeya. The chances, he said, were far better there than near Guelma. Boars were plenty; there were tiger-cats, lynxes, hyænas, a sprinkling of panthers, 'and other enchanthers;' and, to complete the attractions of the spot, it had been ascertained that there were four lions in the immediate neighbourhood. These natural advantages were enough to prepossess one in favour of any place; but before we agreed, I felt myself bound to caution him, as Dante did Virgil when they were starting on their expedition—

> Consider well if virtue be in me
> Sufficient, ere to this high enterprise
> Thou trust me.

But it appeared that he was willing to accredit me with enough of that property to meet the demands that

might be made upon it, and I had nothing more to say, except to stipulate that I should be permitted to fire at any wild boars or other inferior game that might turn up in the way of business, as a sort of training for the more important work.

That night's diligence brought us to Nechmeya, a pleasant, though perhaps shabby little village, situated in the belt of hilly country that lies between the valley of the Seybouse and the great salt lake of Fetzara; and next morning, having laid in breakfast, and comestibles enough for one, or it might be two days in the wilderness, we started to seek what Cheret called 'renseignements.' For this purpose we repaired to an Arab douar, some miles up among the hills, where Cheret was immediately hailed as an old friend; and a conversation ensued in which, from the frequent repetition of the word 'sayd,' it was evident that the recent proceedings of some local lion or lions were being discussed. A friendly and refreshing bowl of milk was passed round, and we left with what I presume were benedictions from the adults, and sarcasms from the children, most of whom were dressed in a string round the middle, a light summer costume much worn by the younger members of society in remote regions of Barbary. From the information which he had received, Cheret decided upon trying a fountain a few miles farther on, called Aïn Mounchar, a favourite drinking-place with

the wild animals of the neighbourhood,* and led the way along a valley of promising loneliness. At every step the red-legged partridges rose and skimmed away, or trotted up the path before us with easy indifference, and every pool showed traces of the recent mud-path of some family of wild boars. At length we came to a mass of dense brushwood, apparently blocking up the valley, into which Cheret plunged through an aperture that looked like the mouth of a sylvan tunnel, so closely were the branches interlaced overhead. This seemed to be the great thoroughfare for the inhabitants of the forest. In about ten minutes he had shown me the slots of a whole menagérieful of wild beasts. The broad pugs of the lion were indeed wanting, but all the other feræ of North Africa, from the panther to the porcupine, were represented; and the different styles of signature left in the soft clay—the firm, decisive impress of the boar, the clumsy scrawl of the hyæna, the neat dainty footprints of the lynx and tiger-cat—would have furnished a study for one of those sages who offer to describe characters for four-and-twenty postage-stamps. Creeping out of this, we entered upon an open glade surrounded by wooded hills. Just before us, on the summit of a bushy knoll, rose a lofty precipitous limestone rock, so like a

* This is the spot where Jules Gérard's perseverance was so tried by a panther, as recorded in the third chapter of his *Chasse au Lion*.

Rhineland castle, that at first sight it was hard to believe it was of nature's rearing; and over and around it there wheeled a flock of vultures, just as one sees the jackdaws circling round a village steeple. Some steady old birds had already retired to roost on the top and ledges of the rock, and others might be seen in the distance leisurely sailing home. At the foot of this Cheret led the way into a sort of cavern among the bushes, where many generations of wild animals had left a well-marked footpath, and we came upon a little pool of clear cold water, upon which the sun's rays never fell. This was the Aïn Mounchar, and he showed me with some pride the nest he had made for himself, and sat in on divers previous occasions. It was undeniably snug, but there was not room for two in it; so, after one of the hearty repasts usual in such circumstances, we looked about for a suitable lair, and fixed upon a flat slab like a tombstone, partly screened by brambles, and commanding the approach to the spring. Here we settled ourselves for the night, and cleared for action, Cheret producing, among other things, a formidable-looking pistol. He had laughed to scorn my little Adams' revolver, until he had seen its penetrating power, when he agreed that it might be as well to take it. I am not sure, however, that he was not right, and that, in case of a difficulty with a dangerous animal, a common pistol of large bore is not better than any revolver. While on the subject of arms,

I may as well add that he, as well as every man of any experience that I met, was strongly in favour of the explosive balls made by Devisme, of Paris, which they said never fail to explode and knock a terrific hole in a beast's carcass. To use these safely, as well as for other reasons, I fancy the model tool for lion-hunting would be a double breech-loading rifle, on the Lefaucheux principle, about fourteen gauge, and made as short as possible, so as to be handled easily in a confined space. With such a weapon a man might take it easy in the face of a wounded lion; for he could reload in little more time than would be required to cock both barrels; not to speak of the time saved by not having to cap, which will be appreciated by any one who has tried that operation at night.

Night, as it does in the south, came on rapidly. First the various tints of the foliage became blended into one uniform sap green, then the stems of trees faded away, the trees themselves got mixed up with the background behind them, and the surrounding hills loomed out like great black walls, which might have been ten feet or ten miles away, according to fancy. Strange sounds, too, began to float about. Hoarse croaks rose from the valley below, and now and again a cry rang through the woods as of a person shivering with bitter cold. It was somewhat of a disappointment to find that these, so far from being the voices of monsters peculiar to Africa, were nothing more than the night-

songs of the frog and the owl. Suddenly I felt Cheret begin to tremble violently. The chill and the damp had brought on a sudden attack of a fever which he always carried about with him—a legacy left by an old illness caught in the woods some years before. His teeth rattled like the bones of Mr. Pell, the nigger minstrel; and he shook so vehemently, that the only wonder was that he did not shake off the fever then and there. To return to Nechmeya then was impossible; but luckily, contrary to his advice, I had brought with me a plaid, the tried companion of many bivouacs, with which he made himself as warm as possible, and lay down to try and sleep off the fit. 'If the lion comes,' said he, 'mind, taken me before you do anything;' and with this he turned over, and left me to mount guard.

Cheret slept and I watched, and the frogs croaked and the owls hooted, without interruption for a couple of hours; but at last I thought I detected a rustling among the bushes on our right. After a moment's listening there could be no doubt about it: there was something there. The only question was, whether that something was of sufficient importance to justify me in rousing the invalid: it might be only a pig or a porcupine. But at length it got beyond all bearing, and I laid my hand quietly on Cheret's arm. He started up just as if I had touched some spring, or as if he was a jack-in-the-box, and I had raised the lid, and peered into the night in the direction whence the sounds

proceeded with eyes that gleamed like those of the animals he hunted. When I spoke of this afterwards, he said, 'Ah, that's what M. le Comte used to say: he told me my eyes looked like coals when I was watching for a lion.' Whatever the creature was it did not show; the sounds ceased after a little, and Cheret lay down once more. Soon after this the moon rose above the hill-tops, lighting up the valley, and I felt relieved of much of the responsibility thrown upon me; for now there was no possibility of anything stealing a march upon us. Once during the night I thought we were fairly in for it. My eye was wandering listlessly, perhaps a trifle sleepily, over the moonlit clearing at the edge of which we lay, when it fell on an object at the other side that I certainly had not perceived before. It seemed to be just the size and shape of a recumbent lion, and as I watched it I felt almost sure I saw it move gently, as if stretching itself. For the moment the illusion was so perfect, that I said to myself, 'No mistake this time; there he is'—and was going to waken Cheret, when I thought of the former false alarm. He was sleeping so soundly, that it seemed a pity to disturb him for anything short of a certainty; besides, the lion, if lion it was, was at least a hundred and fifty yards off, and there would be plenty of time after he began to move in earnest. I must confess, however, in spite of all the encouraging tales I had heard, I was conscious of a somewhat heightened pulsation.

When ten minutes of close watching had failed to detect any further movement in the object, I began to suspect my mistake; but it was not until the moon shone out brightly through some passing clouds that I was quite convinced. The incident shows how necessary it is on an expedition of this sort to make a mental memorandum of every object within range before night sets in, in order to prevent deception afterwards. The false lion, examined next morning, proved to be a large block of light-coloured stone, sufficiently like, however, in shape to justify the mistake, and the appearance of motion was no doubt produced by the shadows of some clouds passing rapidly over it. But the strangest thing of all was, that the stretching action which I had attributed to it was, Cheret said, eminently characteristic of a lion under the circumstances.

As morning approached the air got chilly, and Cheret, waking up, proposed lighting a fire, as there was now no chance of anything coming till daybreak. We were fortunate enough to find plenty of dead branches, and in a few minutes we had got up a lordly blaze, that threw a glare over the woods, and lit up every cranny of the old rock above us, making several serious-minded vultures, to judge by the croaking and flapping of wings that followed, fancy the end of the world had come. By the side of this, after either the latest of suppers or the earliest of breakfasts, we lay down

for a short nap, but overslept ourselves shamefully, for it was daylight when we woke; so that if the lion came, it is probable he either was touched by our confidence or judged us to be tough. On the principle of having something for our money, we managed before starting to bag one of the vultures. Not without some difficulty, however: Cheret said he took as much killing as two lions or half-a-dozen boars.

At the inn at Nechmeya we found two carriers at breakfast, who accounted for the absence of at least one of the lions of the neighbourhood. They had met him that morning on the roadside, not far from the village, and he had almost frightened their horses into the ditch. Cheret, however, was too ill for anything except quinine and castor-oil, of which I luckily had a stock in my portmanteau, so their information was useless. We strolled out one or two evenings to try for a boar or a panther, or anything that might turn up; but he was not well enough for night watching. On one of these occasions we had something of an adventure, which was rather illustrative of life (and death) in Algeria. We were making our way one evening after dark through the brushwood, I in front, Cheret a few paces behind, when something in the nature of a firearm went bang among the bushes, and a bullet whizzed past unpleasantly close to my head. "Clé nom de Dieu!" said Cheret, dashing into the brush, where, as I followed, I found him at grips with a long Arab, who held one of

those villanous-looking horse-pistols which figure so conspicuously in Horace Vernet's pictures of Arab warfare. In spite of this evidence of a criminal intention, the gentleman swore, first that he had not fired at all, then that he had fired under the impression that it was a wild boar that was coming, and finally that he thought it was a marauder. Cheret, in his wrath, was at first, I think, for shooting him, which certainly would have been the simplest way of settling the difficulty, and, with such conveniences for disposing of the body, might have been done with impunity; but ultimately he proposed that we should take him, and that I should proceed by that night's diligence to Bona and lodge a *procès verbal*. This did not quite suit my views. Being bound over to prosecute at the assizes scarcely seemed to come in among the pleasures of an autumn tour; so I suggested, as a kind of friendly compromise, and to settle the matter on the spot, that it would be better to thrash him, especially as there were plenty of sticks lying ready to hand. There was a particular fascination, too, about the idea of this mode of punishment. He was a stately-looking scoundrel, and picturesque withal; and as he roared and rubbed himself under castigation, there would have been that incongruity about his appearance which Sydney Smith says is essential to a sense of the humorous—to say nothing of the strict justice of the infliction. Cheret, however, wisely I have no doubt, objected to this as being a half measure, and only cal-

culated to get us into a scrape; so we let the poor fellow go, with a promise that he should be arrested the next day, and shot at the earliest convenience of the authorities. No doubt he did not perceive the second figure when he fired; and his motive was probably either a desire of plunder, or of knocking over a Christian, or possibly a mixture of both.

A night or two afterwards I was in the diligence bound for Bona, when, just about the spot mentioned by the carriers, the horses began to snort and plunge violently, and the driver to call them pigs and brigands, after the manner of French Jehus in difficulties. At this, a stout gentleman, who had been asleep in the opposite corner of the *coupé*, woke up, and said, 'C'est un lion dans les broussailles; on le rencontre souvent ici,' and went to sleep again; but, whether or not he was right in his conjecture, the darkness of the night prevented me from ascertaining.

Once again, notwithstanding previous disappointments, I was induced to try my luck. Being at the pretty little town of Jemmapes, on the road between Bona and Philippeville, led away by glowing descriptions of the scenery and sport to be found, I accompanied a *garde forestier*, Fannet by name, up into the mountains between the town and the coast. As far as I could judge in a two days' ramble, the accounts I had received were not exaggerated. The scenery was something like that of Devonshire, but on a larger scale,

richly-wooded hills and winding valleys opening out here and there into park-like expanses, dotted with noble evergreen and cork oaks; and as for game, there was evidence enough to show that it was not scarce. Wherever the acorns fell, the tracks of the wild boars abounded; and once or twice we got glimpses of their black backs, like porpoises rolling in a sea of foliage, as they plunged through the underwood of some ravine. Panthers, too, seemed to be plenty, from the frequent occurrence of their footprints, and of spots where they had torn up the soil with their claws, stretching themselves, I presume, or, as our Arab guide put it, by way of 'fantasia.' Of lions we saw nothing, though we heard a good deal. A plucky old lady, the wife of the forester at whose hut we put up, said they used to come and roar in the little garden before her door. She did not mind it now, she told me, though when she first came to live there she did not like it at all, especially when her husband was from home. It made her feel lonely, she said, and she used to keep a candle burning all night.

One morning, in one of the higher valleys, we came upon a colony of apes holding a noisy public meeting on some subject which seemed to admit of a vast variety of opinions, and I confess with shame that I was led to put up the rifle and cover one of the orators. But happily the reflection, 'What would Professor Huxley say?' joined with a certain 'am-I-not-a-man-and-a-

brother' expression about the creature, checked me in time, and saved me from a crime worse than even monkeycide; for here there was no tail that I could have pleaded in excuse.

Our attempts here show what a Will-o'-the-wisp kind of pursuit this sport is. The first night we selected a spot where the traces of the panther were numerous and fresh. It was a well-known place, too, evidently; for up in a tree hard by was one of the nests the Arabs build for themselves when they try for a lion or a panther. But nothing visited us, nor did we hear anything except the chattering of the apes, and once, miles away among the hills, a deep moaning sound, which swelled gradually into a prolonged bellow, and died away again as it had commenced. Distant as the sound was, there was no mistaking what Jules Gérard calls 'la voix du maître.'* In the morning we heard that a panther had been seen at a spot lower down the valley, and there we placed ourselves for the night. Next day we found that if we had kept to our first position, we should most likely have met with him, for he had been observed in that direction.

* The Arabs fancy they can detect in the lion's roar the words 'Ana ou ben el m'ra,' 'I and the son of woman;' implying that he and man reign jointly over the brute creation; but the distance was so great that I cannot speak to the resemblance. I thought it reminded me more of the voice of an angry bull than of anything else: at the same time there was an indescribable difference.

Finally, at Jemmapes I learned that on the evening of the day we left the hills, a lion had passed down the valley, close to the place where we had been sitting the night before.

From all I have heard from 'old hands,' it would seem that this kind of thing enters largely into the experience of the hunter in Algeria. Still I cannot regret the trials my patience underwent in this way; for I look back upon these rambles as some of the pleasantest episodes of a pleasant tour. As Campbell says, speaking of this same land—

> The echo of these wilds enchanted me;
> And my heart beat with joy when first I heard
> A lion's roar come down the Libyan wind.

THE LION'S PATH.

CHAPTER XI.

A DERBY DAY WITH THE ARABS.

EVER since the French have had leisure for such things, and especially since the campaign in the Crimea, where the value of the Arab as a cavalry horse was so abundantly proved, the Government has given a good deal of attention to horse-breeding and horse-flesh generally in Algeria. It has established haras, or breeding-studs, in several parts of the colony; and a considerable number of francs is spent annually in buying up animals of good points and pedigree for sires. Besides this, races, under the patronage of and for prizes offered by the Government, are frequently got up throughout the three provinces. One of the first things that catches the eye of the traveller, as he enters any of the more important towns, is a large poster relating to certain 'courses' which either have taken place or are to take place somewhere in the neighbourhood, under the direction of the 'commandant supérieur,' or some other distinguished official; and it was through one of these affiches that we first got the information, subsequently confirmed by the scarcity of beds, that it was 'race-week' in Constantina. My companion was a French tourist—a rare bird

in Algeria, though common enough on the Rhine. Our acquaintance had sprung up in Marseilles harbour, and gathered strength from the discovery that there was a community of no-purpose between us—that we alone of all on board had no particular object except the indulgence of vagabondism in going to Algeria. It languished a little in the Gulf of Lyons; for 'rolling seas' divide people on board the same ship as effectually as if they rolled between continents; and there are moments when even a Boswell would not give a farthing for the sentiments of his Revered Friend on any subject whatever, and probably would rather not see him at dinner. But on smoother waters and under the ripening southern sun it rallied, and bore fruit in the form of a travelling league, which was to continue in force till the end of our stay at Constantina. There are, it would seem, certain things inseparable from horse-racing, let the country, climate, or circumstances be what they may. Mr. Oliphant found a Derby Day at Lucknow very like one at Epsom, as far the road was concerned; and here at Constantina we found that coolness of reception which everyone must have experienced who has had the misfortune of paying a visit to Doncaster or Chester during race-time. As our vehicle rumbled up the market-place in the grey of the morning, the waiters, it is true, sauntered out from the hotels in the neighbourhood; but it was from force of habit, or because they had nothing else to do at that

early hour, not with an eye to business. They were full, they said; and they took that contented and philosophic view of the wants of their fellow-creatures which repletion always produces. We wanted board and lodging, sleep and refreshment; and they wished we might get them. That was about all they were prepared to do for us. And yet on this very spot, about a year before (only it was not then race-week), I had been fought over as though I were the body of Patroclus, by rival hotel retainers. On that occasion victory remained with the representative of the Hôtel des Colonies, in consequence of a statement made by him that the Hôtel de l'Orient was haunted by a breed of bug which especially affected houses of Moorish architecture; a fact in natural history which I now mentioned to my companion as worth insertion in any notes he might be taking in his quality of enquiring tourist. The allusion was well-timed, for being overheard, it elicited the remark that apparently monsieur had been here before. But yes, certainly, monsieur had been here not quite a year before. This altered the complexion of affairs immediately. From being a mere casual, I became a customer—'a gent as used the house,' as our Saxon tongue, with noble simplicity, phrases it; and my friend shone in a reflected light as a customer *in futuro*. To such an hotel is never full. Be it race-week or election time, somehow it always turns out that No. 24 is going away to-day, or that the party that has engaged 13 is not coming till

the day after to-morrow; and, through some discovery of the sort, we got rooms and breakfast.

For the rest, the effects of the races on Constantina were of an indigenous character. The cafés in the Grande Place, usually altogether in the occupation of the French army, were now crowded by the 'country party' of Algeria. There were prosperous kaïds, from the immediate neighbourhood, men of property, perhaps even house property in this same city of Constantina, and in town to kill two birds with one stone, to enjoy themselves and see about their rents. There were well-to-do Arabs from the south, in the finest and whitest of bernouses, evidently the owners of large flocks and many camels, and vast hoards of wheat and barley, cunningly buried in many a hole among the southern sand-hills. Fine old Arab gentlemen these, all of the olden time, yet not so bigoted that imported manners were wholly odious in their sight. In some instances they even joined in a friendly game of billiards or glass of absinthe with some jolly 'dog of a Christian' who had made their acquaintance when on duty among their tribes; for, although the Prophet has strictly forbidden the drawing of lots for portions of camel's flesh, he has said nothing about billiards; and though he foresaw that his Mogrebbin followers were in time to be subjected to the temptation of absinthe, doubtless he considered its nauseousness a sufficient safeguard. At any rate, there is nothing in the Koran to forbid an

orthodox Mussulman from occasionally indulging in the beverage.

Some of the groups thus formed would have made interesting subjects for the philosopher or the painter. Here at one glance you have the old world and the new; the picturesque Past, and the practical Present; the moveless, trustful, 'resigned'* East, and the restless, self-reliant, self-believing West. On one side of the mock-marble café table you have wiry, compact Europe; with shaven cheek and bristling moustache, well girthed and tightly buttoned, ready for action at a moment's notice; efficient, but not poetical to look at. On the other sits Asia, seemingly on three chairs—for his robe, of a fashion which dates farther back than chairs, is too much for one—a stately sight, everything about him easy, flowing, and unconstrained, from his voluminous white drapery and long grizzled beard, even to the gutturals of his language, which roll from *his* mouth like the bubblings of a nargileh, while the best attempt of Europe opposite only produces a sound like a terrier's bark. Behind, perhaps, is young Asia, a handsome boy—as the young Arab of gentle blood

* 'Who will be averse to the religion of Abraham but he whose mind is infatuated? When his Lord said unto him, Resign thyself unto me; he answered, I have resigned myself unto the Lord of all creatures. And Abraham bequeathed this religion to his children; and Jacob did the same, saying, My children, verily God hath chosen this religion for you; therefore die not unless ye also be resigned.'—'Resigned,' 'Moslemûna,' in the singular, 'Moslem.' Sale's *Kyran*, chap. ii.

generally is—fair-skinned, with bright black eyes, and a pleasant laughing face; a dandified young monkey, in his fine snow-white bernous, and silken sash, and little red morocco boots. He has been brought up here from the tent to see the town—perhaps for the first time in his life; and yet, boy-like, he is not the least awed by its wonders; on the contrary, he amuses himself with teasing the venerable greybeard who accompanies his father as henchman, just as if they were all at home among the 'houses of hair' of their tribe, a hundred miles away.

The tented Arab, when he is a man of substance and rank, will sometimes share in town dissipation to this extent; but his poorer brother, who has not been brought much, by his position or business, into contact with townsfolk, still retains a great deal of the old Bedouin shyness. He has not, in Algeria, that painful dread of the city which Eöthen has so touchingly described as one of the characteristics of the Bedouin of the Syrian desert; indeed, he has no reason for it—at least, since the French occupation of the country. But still he is not at his ease among streets and houses, and the moment he has bought his gun-flint or saddle-cloth, or done whatever business brought him there, he gallops away as if he and his mare were glad to shake off the dust of civilisation, and once more fill their lungs with the uncontaminated air of the plains. There must have been on this occasion in the neighbourhood of

Constantina, some thousands of nomads, who had come to see or take part in the races, or join in the fantasia with which every solemnity in Algeria winds up. Their camps dotted the plains and hill-sides all round the city; and on the plateau on the south, between the ravine of the Rummel and the heights of Mansourah, a large and populous suburb of tents had suddenly sprung up. But it contributed nothing to the bustle of the town, except in the form of an occasional wild-looking horseman, armed to the teeth, clattering up the street at that quick shuffling walk which, next to the gallop, is the favourite pace of the Arab cavalier, and passing houses and shops, and barrel-organs, and umbrellas, and other city wonders, without any apparent surprise at the number of things there are in the world of which he had no need. There is, indeed, one class of shop he cannot pass without a good stare: a gunmaker's is too much for his stoicism, and the polished barrels and stocks of the armes de luxe in the window make his mouth water when nothing else will move him.

They have, it is true, a legened at Constantina tending to show that Arabs cannot always abstain from looking into shop-windows; but the persons concerned were not Bedouins, so it does not affect the present proposition. When the Sidi Abd-er-Rahman-ben-Djellab ruled at Tuggurt, in the region of the Wed Rhir, he was in the habit of sending a messenger occasionally to Constantina (then recently occupied by the French), to make purchases

and collect news. In the process of time he remarked that, however the accounts of his informants might vary in other particulars about the city, they all agreed on one point, viz., that there was, in a certain street at Constantina, a damsel whose beauty surpassed the most extravagant conceptions of their most imaginative poets. Now Abd-er-Rahman-ben-Djellab was at this time in a depressed state of mind. There was a vacancy in his heart and harem. He was a widower to an extent that may be represented by the vulgar fraction $\frac{1}{4}$; for the favourite, fairest, and fattest of his four wives, Ghazala, 'the gazelle,' who weighed nearly twenty stone, had just died. These tales of the Constantinan beauty excited, first, curiosity, and then a warmer and a stronger passion; and he called to him his major-domo, a faithful person and a man of judgment, and bade him go to the city of Constantina and bring back a true report. And the major-domo replied, 'I hear and obey,' and went, and returned, and reported, saying—'It is true, O my master, what thy servants have said, and there is no lie in it at all. I myself have seen her. Her cheeks are like ripe pomegranates, and her eyebrows are curved like the branch of the palm-tree, and her hair resembles the tail of El Warda, the mare of the Prophet, whose name be extolled! And all day she sits in the window of her father's house, which is indeed a mean casket for so bright a jewel, and stedfastly regards the persons who pass by, smiling in a manner that deprives the beholders

of reason.' Then the heart of Abd-er-Rahmąn was inflamed, and he gave a large sum in douros to the major-domo, and told him to go to Constantina and bring back the damsel at any cost. And the major-domo departed, and went to the house of the damsel's father; and, finding the father at the door of the house, he mentioned his mission, and explained that he came on the part of a mighty prince of the South, to demąnd in marriage his daughter the fair damsel who habitually sat in the window smiling, and that he was prepared to offer a handsome marriage portion. Whereupon the father was much perplexed; for, indeed, he had no daughter. He was only a hairdresser from Marseilles, who cut for the officers of the garrison, and curled for their wives; and the damsel was but a dummy: a wax-work figure which he had placed in his window as an indication of his profession. But the major-domo was a man of a literal turn of mind, and as he had been instructed under severe penalties not to return without the damsel, he bought the image, and it became one of the chief ornaments of his master's harem. And Abd-er-Rahman-ben-Djellab, who was a man of pleasant humour and also of vast matrimonial experience, has been heard to say—so the story goes—that there were worse wives, so far as peace and quietness were concerned, than the one he got from Constantina.

But though they would not come into the town, the Bedouins held high festival at night on the esplanade,

outside the principal gate. Here were to be seen the analogues of the Ethiopian serenader, the barrel-organ, the comic orator, and the other humorous features of our Derby Day; and as with us these satellites of sport are always accompanied by purveyors of various inexpensive, but not attractive sorts of food, so it was here. Mixed up with the popular performers there were several popular restaurateurs administering to the Arab public some of the most abominable-looking forms of refreshment it has ever been my lot to behold. One must not, however, judge of Arab dishes by their appearance. Kous-kous, at the best of times, is not a very inviting *plat*, but it is far from bad, if at all decently prepared; and there are many worse things for luncheon than a handful of the date-paste of the tents, though it does look uncommonly like mashed cockchafers in treacle. It must be confessed, however, that any comparison between our nigger melodist and the gentlemen who perform the corresponding services for the Bedouin sporting world would be very much to the disadvantage of the London Arab. Owing, perhaps, to the fact that the Moslem mind has not a keen sense of humour, the performer is not a poor creature with a smudged face, limp hat, enormous shirt-collar, and red inflamed eyes, but a grave, decorous, almost venerable—at any rate, highly picturesque—individual; and round him is a circle, from one to four deep, according to his merits, of cross-legged listeners,

whose demeanour and attitude of respectful attention would make a street-preacher envious. Very likely, if one were able to understand it, the entertainment would turn out to be uncommonly monotonous and stupid, according to European notions. But contemplated without the disturbing influence of any knowledge of what it is all about, it has a certain flavour of the 'Arabian Nights,' as though you were studying one of the 'Thousand and One' in a somewhat shabby and tattered, but at any rate original, copy. It is of two sorts, prose and verse. In one group the attraction is a story-teller standing up in the middle of the ring, and when he gets excited, pacing about and delivering his narrative with much gesticulation. In the next it will be an Arab ballad-singer, who accompanies himself on a rude tambourine, assisted by a couple of instrumentalists performing on the gaspah, or reed-flute, which is the popular instrument with the Bedouin. If we are to judge by the specimens of Arab lyrics that have been published, the chances are that the song he is singing is not remarkable for much poetical merit. It is probably not much worse than things of the sort generally are; for in spite of the efforts of German and Germanised enthusiasts who insist on our admiring the simplicity and general beauties of the Mandingoische Volkslieder and the like, it must be confessed that popular songs, as they are called, have for the most part a 'damnable iteration' in them, and bear about the same

relation to poetry that the willow-pattern plate does to pictorial art. In nine cases out of ten the theme of the Arab lyrist is, in fact, the 'Sally of his Alley,' her attractions, and his affection for her—a subject which has been rather frequently treated of by lyrical poets. But the mode in which it is administered to a listening public is at least peculiar. The singer (generally a grave, grey-bearded old fellow, who ought to know better than sing amatory ditties at that time of night), ignoring his audience, and looking into his tambourine for encouragement, sings—

Among the fairest maidens of the tribe there is none like little Sara.

Here the flutes repeat the notes of the air—if air it can be called—while he beats time on the tambourine—

She is the darling of my heart, and she dwells in the Sahara.

Flutes and tambourine as before—

Her mother is a skilful weaver of haïks:
Her father makes horse-shoes for the warriors of the tribe.

Flutes and tambourine again—

But these persons are not really the parents of Sara.
I cannot believe it.
She is the darling of my heart, and she dwells in the Sahara.

Here comes in a double allowance of flutes and tambourine; and so on to the end, when he declares that

as soon as Rhamadan is over, and he has money enough, he will marry Sara, and take her to his tent, but not in the Sahara.

On the south side of Constantina rise the heights of Mansourah; and beyond them is a great plain, watered by the Rummel, and crossed by the road to Batna and the Sahara. The race-course was on this plain; and as the distance by path was half that by the road, we elected to go on foot. I think the appearance of the vehicles and their occupants fortified us in this determination. In either case we were sure of heat; but heat in the open air is more endurable than heat in a box on wheels, by courtesy called an omnibus, plus dust and Arab society. For although the 'shore of Araby the blest' may have once diffused Sabean odours of a refreshing sort, the property has not been transmitted to the garments of the children of Araby of the lower and middle class, and they cannot be described as 'spicy' in any sense of the word.

The first view of the course on coming down on it from the Mansourah was very striking. On a race-course in any other part of the world the great bulk of the spectators would have been on foot. Here, except a comparatively small knot of people about the grand stand, every one was on horseback. The course itself was in the form of a circle, about a mile in circumference; and it was hedged in everywhere, with scarcely even a gap, by mounted Arabs, each with his long gun

slung over his shoulders or held upright before him. These were the goums or fighting forces of the tribes in the neighbourhood—a wild-looking set of warriors, fit representatives of the old Numidian cavalry, gaunt, bony men mounted on lean, wiry steeds, and, man and horse, ready for anything in the way of barbarous warfare. They are now to some extent in the French service; for, as each tribe submitted, one of the conditions was that its goum should be always ready when called upon to cooperate with the French forces. In this way they have on several occasions made themselves useful, after their own fashion, and have contributed to the subjugation of Algeria; and, theoretically, the French have some hundred thousand irregular cavalry to aid them in preserving order in the colony, provided always that it is not the irregularity of the said cavalry which constitutes the disorder to be corrected. Mixed up with these, or galloping fussily about the plain, were the spahis, looking, in their scarlet bernouses, like fox-hunting Arabs at a meet. These form another military force, which must not be confounded with the goums. The goums are, in fact, nothing more than the original fighting men of Algeria, who, being beaten, have promised on future occasions to fight with, instead of against the French, and are not paid, armed, disciplined, or in any way controlled by them. The spahis, on the other hand, are a highly-organised and efficient body. They are all Arabs of the better class; for it is

a service much sought after by the natives for the sake of the importance, the pay, and the privileges it brings. Their duties are something between those of irregular cavalry and mounted police; each man finds his own horse, but the Government supplies the red bernous, the carbine, and the sabre, which, by the way, the spahi always carries, not in European fashion, dangling at his side, but tucked in between the saddle and in the saddle-cloth, with the hilt just in front of his knee. Away to the left, a great mass of red breeches indicated the presence of the irrepressible soldier, always conspicuous at a French ceremony—doubly so when the ceremony takes place in French Africa. The centre of the circle was evidently being kept sacred for some special persons or purpose, and was occupied by only a few soldiers and some dozen mounted Arabs. The grand stand was a creditable affair, all things considered; at any rate, it had the great merit of offering shelter from the beams of an African sun, for which reason we sought its protection speedily, without bestowing any time on the humours of the course, which seemed to consist mainly in the consumption of limonade gazeuse.

According to the 'correct card,' there was certainly no lack of excitement in store for us. Instead of the paltry four or five races that Mr. Dorling promises at Epsom, there were at least twenty. There were races for poulains et pouliches—colts and fillies—bred in the province, and for horses the property of heads of tents,

and for horses of European breeding, and for all comers, Arab or European; not to mention a race *à la haie*, or hurdle-race, to which I looked forward with great interest. Besides this, there was to be a *défilé des étalons* of the Government stud, a march past of the troops, and a grand fantasia by the goums. Without a strong faith in French organisation, it would have seemed impossible to get through all this in the time. While studying the programme, there arose on the right a sound as if a lunatic piper who had escaped from his keepers was striking up the most insane piece in his répertoire. It was only the band of one of the goums, who thought to enliven the proceedings with a little music, and to that end played an air which, like Arab music in general, was well calculated to drive a man to do something desperate. The effect of this on the knot of mounted Arabs opposite was precisely that which the untimely crow of a restless cock produces on his rival in a neighbouring yard. A stately old fellow whom I had been respecting as a possible sheikh, or shereef, or something of that sort, owing to his imposing appearance, suddenly whipped a flageolet out of the hood of his bernous; his next neighbour disclosed a pair of small kettle-drums; three or four more produced musical instruments in an equally unexpected manner, and the moment the opposition band had blown itself breathless they crowed defiance to it in a tune that was, if possible, a trifle more exasperating. The contest was kept up with a

great deal of spirit and pretty equal success during the day, but at last the venerable conductor of the band opposite hit upon a plan for discomfiting his rivals. They, poor fellows, had nothing but native music, which, whatever Mr. Samuel Lover may say, was not

——beyond comparing
The sweetest far on the ear that falls—

while he had one Christian tune; and at length greatly daring, he brought up this reserve, determined to do or die. It was that highly popular Quartier Latin melody, the 'Sire de Framboisie;' and, coming from so grave a source, it had all the effect of a comic song by the Archbishop of Canterbury. At the first there was a little uncertainty —the very boldness of the attempt evidently staggered his men—but by the time they had got to the part where the tune, exulting in true French spirit that the 'Sire,' in choosing a wife, 'la prit trop jeune, et bientôt s'en repentit,' breaks out with a jubilant chorus of 'Youp! youp! youp!' they were themselves again, and performed the beautiful air in a style that quite shut up their antagonists. These latter did make one or two gallant attempts to hold their own, but each time the triumphant 'Sire de Framboisie' came out as fresh as if he had never been played before, and trampled on them, so to speak. There was no use in contending with such accomplished musicians, and they

wisely gave up, and I think I saw them afterwards galloping and firing like mad in the fantasia.

Punctual to the announced time, the commandant, superior officers of the garrison, and some of the civil authorities of Constantina, rode across the course, and took up their position opposite the stand. With them came a body of Arab grandees of sufficient importance to be admitted within the sacred circle—imposing figures in bernouses of every possible colour, white, black, scarlet, blue, puce, and some of them—magnates from the Sahara these—in enormous straw hats, three or four feet in diameter, covered with black ostrich feathers, and screening the head and shoulders as completely as an umbrella. Thanks to French organisation, there was no time lost in clearing the course; it had been kept clear the whole time, even the usual dog had not been allowed to set foot on it; and immediately on the arrival of the great people, the starters for the first race took their places at the post. The Arab is the most reasonable horse in the world: the moment he understands what is expected of him, he accommodates himself to circumstances in the most well-bred way, and however mettlesome he may be, does not fidget, bolt, or caper, as his European cousin is apt to do at a starting-post. We had ample opportunity, therefore, for studying the points of the horses. They were five Arabs of the ordinary stamp: four of them dappled or silver-grey; the fifth, dark bay: and this, by

the way, is about the proportion in which the colours are in general distributed, at least in Algeria. For one bay, black, brown, or chestnut, there are three or four whites or greys of one shade or another. To an eye accustomed to European horse-flesh they would have looked, perhaps, at the first glance, very like a lot of screws. They had all bad quarters, very indifferent shoulders, and most of them were decidedly ewe-necked, perhaps in part the effect of the Arab bit, which has a tendency to make a horse throw up his head. But when you came to examine them closely, you found undeniable points about them: legs as clean 'as a whip,' small blood-like ears, heads well set on, with deep jaws, broad foreheads, and full, bright, restless eyes, and, altogether, a look of gameness that showed it was, at any rate, no plebeian animal you had before you. If the horses were unlike what one sees on an English course, the riders were still more so. Most of them were bareheaded and barefooted, and had nothing on except a shirt and a pair of short, baggy trousers. One venerable-looking old fellow, however, sported a very fine plum-coloured silk waistcoat. At the word 'Go,' off they went in a wild, spluttering gallop, every one of them going his hardest, without an idea of holding, or nursing, or waiting, in a mad tangle of men and horses. But before they had got half-way round, they were in Indian file, old Plum-colour leading by a good length, which he afterwards increased to two, coming in an easy winner.

He seemed to be a kind of Arab Fordham or Wells, for he rode in about a dozen races that day. He certainly won six or seven. The moment the race was over, the next starters were put up, and so on, with breathless rapidity, until at last we came to a race which I was particularly anxious to see. All the races up to this, with one exception, had been for Arab horses exclusively, the exception being a race for horses of European origin, owned by residents in the province, which had been run by three very ordinary-looking nags. Now came on a race for all comers, and I was curious to see how the Arab would come out against the European. As far as that issue went, it was a very hollow affair. Three French horses started, among them the winner of the last-mentioned race, and two Arabs. But though the Arabs made all the running at first, they were soon collared and passed, and came in, one of them 'nowhere,' the other several lengths behind the last of the Frenchmen. In fact, the popular notion about the speed of the Arab courser is, I think, erroneous. Great speed is not his strong point: the chances are that on any ordinary race-course the best Arab in the world would be beaten easily by a very second-rate English race-horse. These Arabs were not, of course, first-rate specimens of the race, but they were certainly not bad ones. The province of Constantina has several good breeds of horses; indeed, that of the country near Setif, and the plain of the Medjana, is second to none in Barbary. At any

rate, they were fair average representatives of their race, which is more than could be said for their European competitors. A fortnight or so afterwards, when I was at Tebessa, the commandant showed me an English thorough-bred, which, he said, had easily run away from every Arab he had ever tried him against. But what was far more remarkable about this horse, was that, once acclimatised and accustomed to the hard life and hard fare of the Arab horses, he quite equalled them in hardiness and endurance, as had been proved in the course of many expeditions and tours of inspection among the tribes of the district. Endurance, hardiness, and pluck are the real merits of the Arab horse. If he cannot get barley, he will thrive on chopped straw, on the prickly plants of the Sahara, on anything almost, and there is scarcely any limit to his power of endurance. According to Abd-el-Kader,* fifty miles a day is only regular work for him; when pushed he can do 150; and there are instances of his doing nearly 250 in four-and-twenty hours.

The course *à la haie* was also open to all competitors; and here again the *indigènes* did not cover themselves with glory. The *haie* consisted simply of an obstruction about two feet high, and composed of rushes. The French horses knew what a sham it was, and brushed through it without taking the trouble of

* Quoted in *The Horses of the Sahara*, by General Daumas: translated by James Hutton.

even going through the form of rising; but the Arabs were puzzled, and one—ridden, I think, by old Plum-colour—rose straight into the air, and descended on the obstacle as if out of a balloon, after which he demolished it. The *défilé des étalons*, which followed the last race, produced one or two magnificent animals, and several very commonplace ones; and then came the great event of the day—the fantasia by the goums. In preparation for this, the crowd of mounted Arabs concentrated itself gradually on one side of the course, and the 'swells' withdrew from the centre to leave the space clear. There was a pause for a moment; and then an Arab was seen to dash suddenly out of the crowd, and gallop madly across the open, standing high in his stirrups, his bernous fluttering in the breeze, and the gaudy shelil, or cloth with which on great occasions the Arab always covers the croup of his horse, streaming out like a banner behind him. When he reached the middle of the open space, still galloping furiously, he fired his long gun, and waving it over his head, sped away over the plain as if his life depended on it. Then came another: then came three or four: then came a dozen, until at length the whole plain was alive with galloping, firing Bedouins. Then, as soon as there was a strong body mustered on the opposite side, they began to gallop and fire in the reverse direction; and so the game went on. Sometimes there would be a lull, and we fancied it was all

over; but two or three enthusiasts would always break out, let fly, and communicate the infection to the rest. In spite of the excellence of Arab horsemanship, the display was not free from accidents. First one poor fellow, apparently from his girth breaking, came to grief; then another got an ugly purl just in front of the stand, and was helped off the ground: but the worst case was that of an unfortunate fantasiast, whose horse made a mistake somehow in mid-career, and over and over rolled horse and rider in a horrible confused mass. After a struggle or two, the horse kicked himself loose, and made off, leaving on the middle of the plain a white motionless lump, which was presently surrounded and taken away; but whether it was a man or only what had been a man that was carried past us, we were unable to ascertain.

This was not the only tragical incident connected with the day. As we were returning, and working our way up the slopes of the Mansourah, there was a sudden halt of the procession, and a rush to a ravine, or gully, on the left. We joined the crowd, and found that the attraction was the dead body of an Arab that had been just found. While we had been enjoying ourselves at the races, there had been foul murder committed on the hill-side not a mile from us, and the blood was hardly dry on the stones which had been used to beat the victim's brains out. Some official suddenly turned up like a *Deus ex machinâ*, and made out a *signalement*

of the poor battered corpse, and it was carried off, and nobody seemed to think much of it. I asked an old resident, whom we overtook, what he thought about it, and his opinion seemed to be that it was a very commonplace affair — only an Arab assassination arising from one of those quarrels that will occur among the *indigènes;* and as to bringing the murderer to justice, if he were caught he would certainly be shot; but that the chances were he would not be caught. If it were a European who had been murdered, it would have been different: in that case no pains would have been spared. But for the Arabs, what was the use of it? they were used to assassination as eels are to skinning!

CHAPTER XII.

TUNIS AND CARTHAGE.

THERE was not much, perhaps, in the first view as obtained through the little circular window of the cell that nautical humour called a state cabin—a heartless allusion to the state in which one lay there when anything of a sea was on. A damp, dark morning; an expanse of calm, inky sea; a strip of coast with bare hills in the distance, and a low, bleak shore ending in a line of watchful batteries; a group of buildings where a light or two still twinkled; and a cluster of masts and spars that cut sharply against the dull, lead-coloured sky. Nevertheless the picture was such a one as is seldom got into a frame of a foot in diameter. All that remains of Carthage was there. That flat shore was once lined by her quays; the slope behind, where Marius sat and made himself a simile for all time, was the site of her temples. Those were the hills whose familiar outline used to appear to Hannibal in his dreams of Home, and to weary Scipio as he lay off here in his fleet. From the summit of that farther one Æneas first beheld the rising city, from the nearer Dido watched the galleys of the departing hero sweeping out to sea—

for, like the cuckoo in the hedge-sparrow's nest, the fable of the poet *will* thrust aside the legitimate historical tenants. Even that somewhat mean-looking mass of buildings to the left had its place in the world's history as the famous fort of the Goletta, the sanctuary of the Tuniseen Corsairs, and the antagonist of Charles V. and Admiral Blake.

From the deck, afterwards, as the day broke, and the sun rose over the mountains of the Dakhul, as that peninsula which terminates in Cape Bon is called, the prospect improved somewhat as far as the picturesque was concerned. The mists rolled away and disclosed the whole of that 'long recess,'* so unlovely in the schoolboy's eyes, glittering like a sheet of gold. Far out to sea, in the mouth of the bay, the rocky form of Zowamour, Virgil's island, lay along the horizon, its office of breakwater just then rather a sinecure, for there was hardly wind enough to fill the latteen sails of the fishing-boats as they crept out one by one from behind the mole of the Goletta. On the one side a long line of yellow shore stretched away eastwards, backed by slopes, dotted here and there with a speck of white or green, where an Arab village or patch of cultivation occurred, and rising gradually until they culminated in a picturesque group of mountains, among which the forked head

* Est in secessu longo locus; insula portum
Efficit objectu laterum; quibus omnis ab alto
Frangitur, inque sinus scindit sese unda reductos.

TUNIS, FROM THE WEST.

View looking across the lagoon towards Carthage and the Goletta.

of Boo Garneen, 'the father of horns,' showed conspicuously. On the other lay the broad lagoon of Tunis, separated from the bay by a narrow strip of sand intersected by the 'gullet,' from which come the Arabic name of Halk el Wed—the throat of the stream—and the Italian 'Goletta;' and at the extreme end, to the west, the city itself looked like a streak of white paint on the tawny shore of the lake. Dr. Shaw thinks that the phrase of 'Leucon Tuneta,' used by Diodorus, is due to the 'chalky cliffs that appear round about it in viewing it from the sea;' but it is not easy to make out where these cliffs are to be found. They are certainly not round about the city. The probability is whitewash was just as much in vogue in the cities of North Africa two thousand years ago as it is now, and Tunis of old produced precisely the same effect upon the eye of the historian that modern Tunis does upon that of the traveller standing on the deck of a steamer off the Goletta, and looking westwards across the lagoon.

Beyond the city, to the north-west, the eye fell upon the heights of the Belvedere, so called by the Europeans, almost the only spot among the parched environs of Tunis where anything like a respectable tree flourishes; and thence, travelling over the expanse of low-lying brown plain on the northern side of the lagoon, came once more to the hills of Carthage, crowned, the one by the village of Sidi Bousaid, the other by the chapel

erected to the memory of Louis IX. of France, saint and Crusader.*

Such was the prospect from the deck of the 'Oasis,' and we had plenty of leisure to examine it. From the extreme deliberateness with which the business of going ashore was managed, anyone, even a blind man, might have known it was a Mahommedan sea-port we had reached. The morning was well advanced before any of the natives thought it worth while to enter into communication with us, and then it was in the form of a boat rowed by a swarthy, red-capped crew, and bearing an outlandish flag and a quarantine officer, which pulled round us at a respectful distance, as though we were a plague-ship. To be sure, some of the faces we showed over our bulwarks did not exactly suggest a clean bill of health. Every navigator must have observed that, however long the voyage, there are always certain passengers whom nobody ever sees till the ship is in port, when they come out, like insects in spring, from heaven knows what holes and corners. We had a few of these stowaways, women chiefly, and their appearance was anything but wholesome. There is no object in nature which gives such an idea of highly-condensed dowdiness as a Frenchwoman of the middle class after a voyage, and before she has had time to get herself to rights. No female (nor male perhaps)

* The view is from a point behind Tunis, looking across the lagoon to the Goletta: the hills of Carthage are those to the left.

of any nation or rank shows to advantage under such circumstances; but it is the privilege of La Française to achieve an untidiness of dress, a muddiness of complexion, a look of having been thrust away among the things for the wash, but discovered before that desirable operation had been performed, that defies competition. There were also some Arabs on board, who looked sufficiently miserable after their night on deck; for if anything is calculated to try Moslem resignation, it is a deck-passage in a Christian steamer. Their poor heads get addled by the unaccountable bustle, fuss, activity, and briskness of the unbelievers. They are always in the way, always squatting or stretching themselves in inconvenient places, from which it becomes necessary from time to time to rout them out. Bights of hard, heavy cables are constantly falling on their naked toes, loose buckets assail their shins, and if a sea happens to be shipped, they are certain to get the largest share of it. But they endure all without a complaint, for doth not the Koran say, 'Verily we have created man in misery'? So they merely draw up their legs, and pull down the hoods of their bernouses, and moan.

Luckily, the health officer was a man of experience and of the world. He saw that such symptoms of sickness as were apparent among us did not indicate anything infectious or contagious, and stretched his authority so far as to permit us to land upon the territory of his Highness the Bey of Tunis, if we could. For some

time the permission availed us nothing; but at length it occurred to the proprietors of a boat in the harbour, that it might be as well to run out and see if there was anyone who wanted to come ashore. The craft was fortunately roomy, and our party not much more than a dozen in number, and not inordinately encumbered with luggage, otherwise it is impossible to say how long some of us must have waited before another opportunity occurred.

For the port of the first commercial city of Barbary, a city which, from its combining manufactures with trade, has some claims to be considered the Glasgow of the Mahommedan powers, the Goletta strikes one as having an unquestionable air of shabbiness about it. A third-rate fishing village on our fidgety shores would long ago have made a prodigious row if left to struggle on with such a pier as this easy Moslem haven is quite satisfied with. On the one hand, as your boat enters the port, you have a rickety, tumble-down pier, jetty, mole—it is hard to know what to call it—apparently rapidly sinking into the sea from shame and a consciousness that it is a disreputable sham. On the other, pleasantly situated on piles driven into the sea, is a wooden building, like a mouldy toll-box, where those persons whose state of health is not satisfactory to the quarantine officers are compelled to stay until they are better; in short, the lazaretto. A dozen vessels, perhaps, of various rigs and nations are lying at the pier,

and it is, to the Briton at least, delightful beyond measure to be greeted by the friendly, staring countenance of the liberal-bosomed 'Sarah Jane' of London, whose noble form, in all its bravery of blue paint and gilding, leans forward, from the bow of the brig so named, to welcome you on your arrival in this outlandish port; where, however, it is much admired by the Arab fishermen as the model of one of the lights of some English harem. On one side of the narrow harbour stands the custom-house, consisting of a wooden shed and a rotten wharf. Here a malignant and a turbaned tidewaiter compelled us all to land and undergo an examination of baggage, far more, I firmly believe, with a view to what the French would call a distraction for himself and his colleagues, than from any stern sense of duty. No doubt it was very slow work sitting all day in that damp box doing nothing. The process was a tedious one, as many of the articles discovered were strange to the searchers, and had to be submitted to an imposing-looking old gentleman who sat at a table; and it was further complicated by the fact that none of us commanded Arabic enough to explain, and none of the officials spoke anything else. However, in these happy countries delay is of no consequence. There are no confounded trains to be uneasy about. Everything waits for everything else, and if there is nothing else to wait for it waits for itself. The grand result was that a syringe, the property of one of the travellers, was

temporarily impounded, but finally restored, and a bundle of cigars found in my portmanteau definitively retained. They were of Algerian make, and being remarkably strong flavoured, it consoled me to think they would probably make that fine old gentleman very ill, if, in defiance of the Koran, he attempted to smoke them.

Besides the custom-house, the Goletta can boast of an arsenal, a barrack, a summer palace for the Bey, a Maltese café or two, and a short street of miscellaneous buildings. Its population seems to consist chiefly of boatmen, fishermen, sailors, and soldiers, the latter the most slovenly-looking warriors in the world. The uniform, as far as trunk and limbs are concerned, is European—a dark-blue jacket and red trousers, both worn generally unbuttoned; but the head-dress is that eternal scarlet skull-cap, called a fez in Turkey, a tarboosh in Syria and Egypt, and a shashya here; and the feet are either naked or thrust into broad yellow slippers. Nor does the military bearing of these gallant fellows appear to be much smarter than their attire. Of the two sentries on guard near the custom-house, one leaned in an easy attitude against the wall, while the other sat on the edge of his sentry-box with his musket across his knees, and peacefully knitted what seemed to be a stocking.

From the Goletta to Tunis, in a straight line across the lagoon, the distance is about seven or eight miles. By land it is four or five more; but, though our boatmen tried hard to persuade us to continue the voyage,

it was generally felt that, in this case, the longer way round would prove the shorter in the end, especially as one of the more enterprising spirits of the place had got out a tolerably promising omnibus for our use. It required some faith in the proverbial elasticity of this kind of vehicle, to believe in the possibility of stowing away our party and baggage. Our Arab fellow-travellers, it is true, had disappeared, except one, who was allowed to hang on by the side of the driver, on the condition, I fancy, of working his passage, which he conscientiously did by screaming discordantly at the horses the whole way, and plying his long, lithe leg as though it were a whip. But we had been joined by two or three recent arrivals from Malta; and there was every prospect of a tight fit inside and a crushing load outside. Somehow, however, it was managed; and, what was still more remarkable, by some magic process we got through the archway in the town-wall, which seemed many sizes too small for the occasion.

There has been so much satire directed at lovely woman, on account of her weakness for large masses of luggage, that, when one is in possession of a fact telling the other way, it becomes a duty to disclose it. The ladies of our party generally had the usual number of chests, boxes, and bundles; but there was one honour to her sex whose entire luggage, as far as I could see, consisted of a canary. Why she selected this particular form of property as a fitting *article de voyage* for travel

in a semi-barbarous country, I could not make out, unless it happened that the bird was an enchanted one, which, when properly invoked, had the faculty of laying bonnets, shawls, boots, and others of those mysterious articles which are currently believed to fill the coffers of the travelling female. But its appearance did not suggest the possession of any supernatural power. On the contrary, it seemed to be, intellectually and physically, below the average of canaries. What with the accidents of travel—the bewildering succession of steamer, boat, custom-house, and omnibus; much swinging about of its cage; many falls, and finding itself several times standing on its head in its water-trough —the poor thing's mind had become totally unhinged, and all its faculties were absorbed in holding on, and trying not to be unwell. The pitching of our omnibus over the plain of Carthage, however, had so completely the effect of a gale at sea, that it fell off its perch and lay, to all appearance, deadly sick at the bottom of its cage.

For it was over this classic ground that the first part of our journey lay: the very stones that caused us so much suffering, as we bumped over them, had once formed part of the suburbs of Carthage (an omnibus in the suburbs of Carthage!) Square blocks, fragments of columns, masses of masonry, still cemented together, lay here and there on each side of the road; while far away to the right stood the ruins of that fifty miles of

aqueduct which once slaked the thirst of the mighty city. For the whole of its extent of twelve miles, it stretches a bare brown plain, with hardly a trace of cultivation, except close to Tunis; and, to the best of my recollection, only one human habitation, a Moorish café, standing in a courtyard with a very scriptural-looking draw-well in the middle. Here the fact that we had cast off Christendom was first brought home to us, by the refusal of el qahwadji to consider the cosmopolitan franc a legal tender in payment for coffee supplied, and by finding ourselves, after getting change from the driver, in possession of a number of heavy discs of copper, bearing an impress in Arabic that looked something like a true-lover's knot gone mad. Opposite this point, about a mile from the shore, lies the little islet of Shiklah, crowned with a venerable fort; a spot which, as it is the only thing in the shape of an island on the lake, is a great resort of the pleasure-seekers of the city. Here too we observed, stalking about in the shallow water, several tall slim birds of the wading persuasion. The distance was too great to identify them positively as flamingoes; but as the lagoon of Tunis is well known to be a haunt of those birds, we, to use a nautical expression, made them flamingoes by common consent. A few miles farther on, scattered olive-trees began to relieve the monotony of the plain, as far as those ugliest of all vegetable productions could do so; and presently we entered a lane, bounded by whitewashed walls. A

traveller, fresh from Europe, would most likely have fancied that on each side lay the cemeteries of the city; but eyes accustomed to the architecture of North Africa saw that this was in fact a street, and that we were actually in the suburbs of Tunis.

A few more jolts and shakes, and a dive through an archway, called, I believe, Bab Kartagineh—Carthage Gate—brought us to the end of our journey, as far as wheels were concerned. We were in the famous city of Tunis—a city whose thoroughfares are not much more practicable for vehicles than those of Venice itself.

The agitating question about hotels, which usually arises on reaching a strange town, is much simplified at Tunis by the fact that there are only two to choose between; and at one of these they do not profess to board their guests. The other, the Hôtel de Paris, was at some distance from the spot where our omnibus had discharged us, and that eminently Oriental institution, the porter, became necessary. Most of the passengers preferred the nearer caravanserai, reducing the party bound for the other to two. My companion was a gentleman from Lyons, commissioned by one of the great silk houses there to examine into some of the processes of the silk manufacture as carried on at Tunis; and, besides his personal baggage, he had some large boxes like emigrants' sea-chests, one of which seemed quite enough for a man to carry. But the porter that we employed, a brawny-looking youth, with an evident dash of negro blood in his veins, scorned the idea

of any one dividing the labour with him. Having strung the boxes together with a piece of rope, he hung them about him like occasional trinkets, while he carried a portmanteau in each hand, a bag on his head, and, to the best of my recollection, a hat-box, or some other small parcel, in his teeth. I had often been staggered at the loads which men of his calling are made to carry in the 'Arabian Nights,' and felt inclined to treat them as pieces of Oriental exaggeration; but now I doubted no longer. Thus festooned, he made for one of the lanes that opened on the space in front of the gate. The streets of Tunis, like those of all Moorish towns, are very narrow. In the course of a pretty complete exploration of the city, I did not discover more than one or two as wide as Holywell Street. The one in question was not more than half that width, and being a leading thoroughfare, was rather crowded. But, as the ballad says,

> Away and away went this proud young porter;
> Away and away and away went he,

scattering the people before him like ninepins. Weighted as he was, the shock was irresistible; and, his mouth being full of hat-box, he was unable to utter the customary warning cry of 'balek!' so the public had no chance. In a European city this would have been certain to produce unpleasant feeling, some of which, no doubt, would have recoiled upon his employers. But these good people are very patient in

the matter of well-established nuisances. Being knocked about in this way is one of the ordinary incidents of street life with them; and they would as soon think of murmuring at the dust of summer, or the cold of winter, as of complaining of an annoyance so much in the natural order of things. For this reason, perhaps, the dignity of the Moslem never seems to suffer from one of these accidents: he never looks ridiculous, as a European would and does. A donkey, laden with filthy dripping water-skins or greasy oil-jars, will charge, in a rapid shuffle, up against two stately, portly old fellows, deeply engaged in the operation of mutual hand-kissing, and send one staggering to the wall, while the other is swept some paces down the street, as if by a powerful besom. But the spectacle does not strike you as having anything of the ludicrous in it, possibly because it is so clear that *they* have no idea of the affair being looked at in that light. Your European would have looked angry or foolish, according to temperament; but to the Mussulman there is nothing in the occurrence to make him feel awkward or indignant. The concussion had been decreed for him by fate; and that is all that is to be said about it. Until a Christian has succeeded in acquiring this philosophical deportment, he had better keep a sharp look-out whene'er he takes his walks abroad in one of these cities; and, while one eye studies the graceful lines of the minaret, or the rich bits of colour and quaint groups of figures in the bazaar, let

him keep the other on the movements of the porters, donkeys, camels, and such features of Oriental life. In spite, however, of the admirable stoicism displayed, I felt this was hardly the way for a stranger to make his first appearance in a society which, until lately at least, was by no means remarkable for tolerance; and it was a great relief when at last we turned into the street of Sidi Mourdjani, where our hotel was situated.

The hotel was a capital specimen of the kind of house inhabited by a tolerably well-to-do Moorish citizen. Although in French hands, it had not been Europeanised, further than by the introduction of tables, chairs, and beds. Entering from the street by a mean-looking door, you came through a dark and not over-clean or sweet passage, to a square open court surrounded by galleries with wooden pillars and railings, so like the yard of an old-fashioned English inn, that it almost seemed strange not to find the mingled odour of beer and stable, the rows of boots left out to clean, the varmint terrier that smelt the calves of your legs. Into this court the doors and windows of all the rooms of the house opened, and it is the prevalence of this mode of building that gives its peculiar dead, eyeless expression to a Moorish street. It is, in fact, except in the quarters where shops and bazaars abound, nothing more than a rudely-paved alley between irregular whitewashed walls pierced by doors, and here and there a loophole, behind the close grating of which you may,

perhaps, catch a glimpse of a veiled and gorgeously wrapped-up figure. This is in general the only window through which the household can inspect the outer world; all the rest look into the court inside. Of the rooms on the ground floor of the hotel the best was that which served for a salle à manger. It was a sort of practical prose edition of that charming little bijou in the Alhambra court at Sydenham, described as the women's apartment; and breakfast, dinner, and any casual refreshments consumed there, had an additional flavour imparted to them by the idea of the mysterious creatures, moon-faced, high-bosomed, like the letter Alif, with mouths like the seal of Solomon, hair blacker than the night of estrangement, and all the other attractions recommended in Oriental poetry, that these walls had looked down upon during the reign of the former proprietor. Opposite the door was a kind of alcove or recess, with a floor elevated a few inches above the level of the room. All round, to about the height of four feet, the walls were lined with coloured glazed tiles. Above this they were coated with a pure white plaster worked into an elaborate tracery of snake-like Arabic characters, winding themselves through the mazes of an intricate geometrical pattern. A door in one corner of the court gave admission to a spiral stair leading to the galleries above and the bedrooms which opened on them, and finally on to the flat roof, which ran all round the court like a terrace, fenced on the inner

side by a light wooden railing, and on the outer by a stout wall four feet high. This latter place of retreat was a great addition to the comforts of the hotel. It afforded a pleasant lounge for the enjoyment of the sea-breeze in the evening; all the more necessary, as the court below was close and hot, and the streets outside were not available for strolling purposes in consequence of the early hours and the unilluminating habits of the Tuniseens; and oft in the stilly night, when slumber's chain had *not* bound me—(the insect world, I regret to say, is strongly represented at Tunis),—I found meditation upon the house-top very soothing.

The view, too, over the city was very curious. On every side it spread out a succession of flat terraces, each fenced by its parapet; and from the extreme narrowness of the streets, the whole seemed to form a compact mass, looking very like a huge white honeycomb. In the middle stood the burley square tower of the Grand Mosque; round it at various distances the more graceful forms of the minarets of the inferior temples raised their conical caps and glittering crescents high above the city. A few fat, white domes, and cupolas covered with shining green tiles, helped to break the uniformity of the sea of house-tops; and here and there might be seen a grave citizen absorbed in religious self-communion, or a group of masons putting the finishing touch to a roof with measured beats of their heavy wooden trowels, or a couple of next-door neighbours exchanging views about the

gossip of 'our street' across the party wall. For the house-top is to Tunis very much what the back garden is to suburban London. You may see Abdallah's shirt there, hung out to dry, and making probably as respectable a banner as the garment of the prophet, supported nobly by something which, inflated by the evening breeze, looks like a double-barrel pillow-case, but is, as you are pleased to believe, in reality, the ample 'pants' of the charming, invisible Mrs. Abdallah.

What struck me most at first, perhaps, was the size of the town. Although aware that it is the second in Africa in extent and population, I was not prepared to find a city more than three times as large as Algiers. Dr. Shaw says it is about three miles in circuit; but this calculation is, I imagine, considerably under the mark. He describes it, nevertheless, as less populous than Algiers, which is not easy to understand, as its present population far exceeds his estimate of that of Algiers; and, judging by the number of houses one sees in ruins, it does not seem likely that it has increased materially since his time.* Indeed, it is far more probable that the population of Tunis has diminished during the last hundred years, owing to the suppression of piracy and the

* According to Davis, the population of Tunis is 200,000. The lowest estimate I heard given was 130,000 Moors, 30,000 Jews, and about 1,500 Christians. In Shaw's time (1727) Algiers contained, he says, 100,000 Moors, 15,000 Jews, and 2,000 Christian slaves. At present its population is little over 60,000, nearly one-half of which is French.

increase in the number of her manufacturing and commercial rivals. Even in the shashya trade, which she had made her spécialité, and hitherto almost monopolised, she is beginning to suffer from European competition.

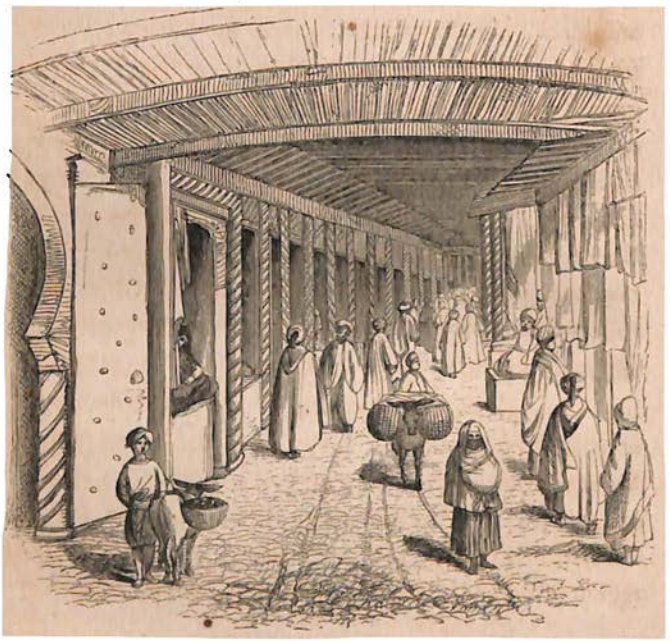
A stroll through the streets of Tunis was not, if all accounts are true, an enterprise to be lightly undertaken by a European a few years ago. Even still, in some quarters, many people assured me, the garb of Christendom is apt to get its wearer into a scrape. I must, however, do the honest Tuniseens the justice of saying that in the course of my solitary rambles, which a certain bias in favour of back streets frequently led me into what Mr. Dickens would have called shy neighbourhoods, I never met with the slightest unpoliteness; not even from that enemy of mankind in every clime, the street-boy, though I many times tried his forbearance by stopping to make a rough sketch. The only effect of a proceeding so well calculated to shock his sense of propriety was the collection of a small crowd, who watched the operation with interest and exclamations of 'Ey ya! el sook, el s'ma, shoof!' 'My eyes! there's the market-place, the minaret, look!' I have reason to believe, by-the-bye, that the enmity between the street-boy and the policeman exists as strongly at Tunis as elsewhere; for on one of these occasions, when an individual in uniform interfered, the art-students immediately took up a strong

position upon an adjacent heap of rubbish, and jeered him with a steadiness and precision that argued long practice. I remember only one instance of anything at all like intolerance. The Lyons gentleman before mentioned (who, with a view to assimilate his appearance as far as possible to that of an average Oriental gentleman, always turned out in black, with a large white neckcloth and a broad-brimmed hat) was one day seized with a desire of examining the Grand Mosque. Now, at Tunis the very steps leading up to the mosques are tabooed to all except true believers, and the moment he attempted to carry out his design there was a ferment among the bystanders. Merchants left their shops, purchasers their bargains. Every follower of the prophet in the neighbourhood interposed to save those holy stones from the desecration of a Christian boot. But no reasonable man could have complained of the manner in which the thing was done. Firmly, but quietly, it was represented to him that there was no admittance except on Mahommedan business. In fact, I think that the Tuniseens, and, as a general rule, the people of North Africa, are, like other inhabitants of warm climates, by no means so black as they have been painted. No doubt, a good deal is due to French influence, for the French are a power at Tunis. This is rather a sore subject with the inhabitants. They look nervously across the frontier to Algeria, and feel they can deny nothing to so powerful a neighbour; but they

by no means relish the part which France plays in the affairs of their country. England, on the other hand, is decidedly popular, as she never interferes, and is, directly, as well as through Malta, a good customer. The discovery that a stranger is Ingleez, not Fransees, is sure to operate strongly in his favour; and I have been told by a Frenchman who knew the country well, that an Englishman might travel almost anywhere in the Beylik in perfect safety, if he could contrive to make his nationality known. The worst of it is, that on the border and in some other places they have a nasty way of shooting without asking any questions.

The position of the hotel favoured the propensities of a flaneur. Within two minutes' walk was the business quarter of the city, and region of the bazaars, which form a maze of arcades clustering all round the Grand Mosque; a lounging-ground worth all the Boulevards and galleries of Paris to a traveller in search of the picturesque. Thackeray somewhere speaks of the first sight of an Eastern bazaar as a completely new sensation, and the bazaars of Tunis are ultra-Oriental. As you pass in out of the glare of the sunshine streaming into the street from above, and reflected by the white walls on each side, the first sensation to your dazzled eyes is one of grateful shade and coolness; the next, as they grow accustomed to the subdued light, is that of looking into a huge kaleidoscope. You look down a long vista of shops hung with stuffs of every colour in the rainbow.

The low, projecting roof of each is supported by wooden pillars, gaudily painted with spiral bands of red, green, blue, and yellow; and over all is spread a light wooden roof, screening the roadway from the sun, but



BAZAAR AT TUNIS.

admitting the air at the sides. On the floor of each shop, which is raised a couple of feet above the pavement, sits the proprietor, as motionless, except when actually showing his wares, as one of Madame Tussaud's wax-works, or the figure of the Great Mogul outside a

tobacconist's; and in the middle space there is an ever-shifting crowd of figures in flowing garments of many hues. Sleek Moors of the city, with gorgeous girdles and waistcoats; wild Arabs* from the country in white or stripped bernouses; women in scanty blue petticoats, and black veils drawn tight accross their noses; blacks from the Soudan, not with that miserable turkey's-gizzard complexion which the nigger is apt to wear in our raw climate, but with a fine, rich, metallic lustre on their skins, as if they were regularly black-leaded every morning like the grates; Marabouts, the fakeers of Barbary, in dirt and tatters; ragged little water-carriers, bending under the weight of their great earthen jars; fruit hawkers, driving donkeys laden with water-melons and pomegranates—these are some of the elements entering into the composition of the tide of humanity which ebbs and flows through one of the bazaars of Tunis. Right and left, they branch off in a bewildering network of passages, each the fac-simile of its neighbour, except as regards the articles it deals in. You pass from the region of silks into that of woollens, where soft carpets of

* The Moors, as distinguished from the Arabs, are the inhabitants of the larger towns on the coast, such as Tripoli, Tunis, and Algiers. Although the difference in appearance, manners, and costume is very striking, there is no reason for believing that there is any difference in race. It may be readily accounted for by the fact that for centuries the former have been merchants, manufacturers, and shopkeepers; while the life of the latter has been, for the most part, agricultural and pastoral.

luxurious pile, and bright-coloured saddle-cloths, praying-rugs, coverlets from Fezzan, adorned with quaint figures of blue men, and scarlet camels, and green dogs, lie exposed for sale; then you come to a long perspective of red boots and yellow shoes, saddles, bridles, and sabretaches, richly embroidered with silk and gold, suspended in atmosphere strongly impregnated with morocco leather; a pleasanter lounge than most of the streets of Tunis, which, besides two-and-seventy stenches like those of Cologne, has at least as many more altogether peculiar to itself.

In one of these bazaars I literally 'stumbled' on a curious illustration of Tuniseen ways. In the centre of the roadway was an oblong wooden box, gaudily painted and partially embedded in the pavement, in a position well calculated for breaking the shins of incautious passengers. This, as I learned in time, partly from a friendly shopkeeper, partly from one of the works of Dr. Davis, was the coffin of a holy man, one Abd-Allah by name, who flourished five or six centuries back. He was a Christian by birth, but becoming a convert to Islam, settled at Tunis, and acquired a great reputation for sanctity; so much so, that his dying request to be interred, or rather, exposed, in this street of Assaragjeah, was unhesitatingly complied with. Readers of the 'Englishwoman in Egypt' will recollect that it is the inconvenient privilege of the Moslem saint to be buried wherever he may fancy his tomb will best keep his

memory alive; and to this end Sidi Abd-Allah's is a masterpiece of ingenuity.

In spite of the crowd, there is very little of that buzz which pervades a European market—for the Moslem looks upon noise as a thing to be reserved for great and important occasions. But there is one period of the day when the hubbub is considerable. From about nine or ten in the morning, in one or two of the principal bazaars, goods are sold in a manner that may be far more properly called 'public outcry,' than our auction system. The owner sits quietly in his shop, while his commissioner, the 'broker' of the Oriental story-book, elbows his way through the crowd, holding up the article—bernous, haïk, gun, dagger, or whatever it may be—and shouting out the price in piastres, 'khamsa ou arbaeen!' 'arba ou ashreen!' 'forty-five,' 'twenty-four,' as the case may be. If in the course of a couple of turns nobody seems inclined to trade, he goes back to his employer, and the article is either returned to store, or sent out again with a piastre or two taken off the price. That called the bazaar, or market of the Bey—Sook el Bey, is the most pretentious but the least picturesque of all. It forms one side of the barracks built by, I believe, the present Bey, and has a stiff European look, quite out of keeping with its neighbourhood. Close by is the Casbah, once the palace, but now simply the arsenal of Tunis, a gloomy-looking old building, making one violent attempt at cheerfulness in the shape of gateway,

the stonework of which is painted with the liveliest of colours. Tunis, indeed, except for its mosques, would

STREET ARCHITECTURE AT TUNIS.

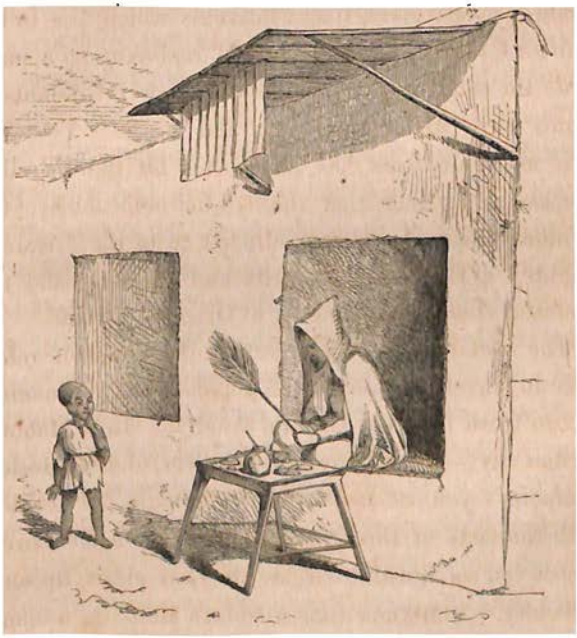
be very poor in what we should call public buildings. Here and there in its streets some striking bit of Oriental

architecture crops out; but in general it is, except in the bazaar quarter, simply a maze of narrow, white lanes, varied by occasional heaps of rubbish where houses have fallen or been pulled down. Nor are there any signs of its great antiquity; for, as far as age can make it so, Tunis is venerable. It is undoubtedly the oldest of all the existing African cities (except, perhaps, Constantina), if the identity of a city be held to depend upon site and name, and not upon stone and mortar. It dates from even an earlier period than the foundation of Carthage, according to some authorities, who make it out to have been the capital of Iarbas, or at least one of those 'great cities of Libya,' through which Fame, as described by Virgil, proclaimed the advent of Æneas and his attentions to Dido. At any rate, it figures early in the history of the Punic wars, in the story of the Regulus; and from the way in which it is mentioned by Livy and others, it was evidently a well-established town and a place of considerable importance when Alexandria was a mere bantling. But, as in the case of most Moslem towns, there is nothing to show that it is more than two or three centuries old, unless it be the ruins of the old town wall, which has been outgrown and superseded by a more substantial modern structure. In one quarter, where the consulates are and the Christians for the most part reside, there is some building going on, chiefly in the European style. Why Europeans settling in Tunis should have selected this part to live in

is hard to make out. It is true, it is the nearest to the shore of the lagoon; but between the city and the lake there is a tract of waste ground so utterly given over to abominations, that in a less healthy climate it would be a never-failing nursury for fever and cholera. It is a vast expanse of rubbish-heaps, relieved by black festering pools, containing the sewage of the city; and if the Fleet Ditch were dammed up and allowed to form a chain of small lakes, that wilderness which lies to the north of Farringdon Street would represent on a small scale the kind of scenery the Christian inhabitants of Tunis have under their eyes and noses. Yet even this unsavoury spot has its charms for the traveller. He sees at a glance that this is what is meant by 'the mounds' that are so often alluded to in the 'Arabian Nights,' as the haunt of afrits and outcasts, and the doubtful characters generally of Oriental city life.

The reader, perhaps, is weary of the frequent reference in travellers' tales to the popular work just named, but in truth it is not easy to avoid it. In a Mahòmmedan city—such is the conservatism of the Moslem character—you are at every turn brought into contact with the facts of the 'Arabian Nights.' Almost every object you see illustrates some story, or clears up some difficulty. You know that Aläddin's lamp was a many-sided affair, with little metal crescents hanging from its corners, for you see the pattern swinging in every shop. Now you understand how it was that the Jew and his wife let down the body of the Hunchback into

the house of the Sultan's steward; and what is meant by nailing up Aboukir's shop; and what a 'market-street' is like. Beside every second door you see the stone seat on which Bedreddin was placed by the Afrit, and on which Aziz sat when the handkerchief fell on him from the lattice above, and off which Alnaschar kicked his tray of crockery. It is not difficult to realise a 'confection of pomegranate seeds,' in a city where



CONFECTIONER'S SHOP AT TUNIS.

pomegranates are about three a penny, and you have them for breakfast every morning. The very fish served

up at that meal remind you of the story of the Fisherman. Not that they are of four colours, but because the contortions of their bodies and the suffering expression of their countenances suggest that they have been put down to fry alive,

> After the fashion of the time,
> And humour of the golden prime
> Of good Haroun Alraschid;

and that their dying agonies have been horribly preserved by the art of cookery. In fact, you are surrounded by the properties and dramatis personæ of the 'Thousand and one Nights.' The old familiar figures of your fancy have become realities, bringing with them recollections of how and where you first made their acquaintance: of the shady side of the haycock, where you first met Camaralzaman and Badoura; of the nook in the shrubbery where the blackbird found you deep in the story of the Magic Horse, and never suspected you were alive till you turned the leaf; even of that sick-room, which to this day connects the adventures of Sindbad the Sailor with the flavour of arrow-root, where you forgot that there were such things as sunshine and merriment out of doors, over the beneficent pages of the schoolboy's Bible.

In spite of a decided preference for solitary rambling, I was obliged to take a guide on one or two occasions. There was a young man, one David by name, a Jew, who acted as dragoman to any of the sojourners at the

hotel who required his services; and a very efficient one he made. With him I visited the Bardo, the Bey's palace — a place where he had special facilities of entrance. He was, he told me, the Tunis agent of the French house which had the contract for clothing the army and the household of the Bey, and he was therefore on the most intimate terms with all those about the palace, from colonels of the guards to coachmen. The Bardo stands on a slightly rising ground, a couple of miles to the west of the city. It is a small town, rather than a palace or castle, being a huge, rambling collection of buildings of every conceivable style. The part in the personal occupation of his Highness is outrageously European—all bow-windows, balconies, and plate-glass. Next to it stands the great gateway, which is the fac-simile of that leading to the Casbah; and the two taken together produce upon the whole an effect like what might be expected if you got a Bedouin Arab to put on a beadle's cocked hat. In fact, a very fair imitation of the Bardo generally might be made by taking the Trafalgar Hotel at Greenwich, St. John's Gate at Clerkenwell, the façade of the Café de Paris, one or two of the better preserved portions of the Rheinfels, a wing or so of a barrack, a slight suspicion of the Alhambra, and an insolvent livery-stables, and mixing them all up together into a kind of architectural salad. Internally, the incongruity is of a simpler character: it is simply a struggle between shabbiness and

magnificence. Entering by the great gate, you pass down a kind of street with colonnades on each side, differing very little from an ordinary street, except that there is a strong infusion of the military element perceptible in the population, and that here and there a black gentleman, very fat in person and very fine in apparel, may be seen lazily sunning himself like a sleek old cat. To the left of this lie the state apartments of the Bey, and the hall where, before the 'Constitution,' he sat and administered justice in person, as the supreme judge of the kingdom. No one that I asked at Tunis seemed to know exactly what were the essential points of this constitution, which has since then come to an end. As far as I could make out, there was a ministry, and also, I believe, a 'chamber' of some sort: but whether it 'growed,' like Topsy, or was elected in some way; and whether it was supposed to check the Bey, or the ministry, or both, or neither; and whether it ever sat, and if so, what it sat about, were questions which nobody seemed able to answer—and, to tell the truth, nobody seemed to think of the least importance. The only feature that appeared to be considered worth mention was, that the Bey himself no longer sat for judgment, and commanded and forbade, and invested and deposed, and gave and denied, in the regular old Mahommedan fashion; but had adopted the new-fangled European system of specially-appointed judges. Even then, I

gathered, the change was was not regarded with favour by the people, and there can be no doubt that it conduced to bring about the present insurrection more than anything else, except the increase in the capitation tax. The Moslem mind cannot conceive the idea of a ruler who is not in his own person the sole source of power and fountain of law. The insurrection is, therefore, a purely conservative movement: Tunis desires its old form of government—despotism tempered by assassination.*

The Court was not sitting when I paid my visit to the Bardo, so I only saw the vestibule, which is reached by a handsome marble staircase, and struck me as being the finest entrance to a temple of justice I had ever seen. I cannot say as much for his Highness's stables —at least for those I saw. They were nothing better than sheds, and contained a muster of very sorry-looking screws. But the coach-house would have satisfied any reasonable man. There were about thirty carriages, all of European build, but of every possible description,

* It is nearly three hundred years since Tunis became, what it still is nominally, a dependency of the Porte; and since then rather more than half the Beys who have come to the throne have either been murdered, or compelled to fly in order to escape murder. This, however, is a low rate of mortality for a Barbary State. In Algiers not more than one in ten of the Deys died a natural death. In fact, the history of Tunis presents a very favourable contrast to that of North-western Africa in general; and in this insurrection there appears to have been a temper and moderation displayed by the insurgents, such as we do not often find evidence of in the history of European revolt.

from state-coaches to pony-phaetons. There was one roomy conveyance which I regarded with the deepest interest. It was a cosy-looking old omnibus with curtains, which used to be employed in taking the ladies of the harem down to the sea in the bathing season. If not the rose itself, it had, at any rate, been near it. As I saw it, it was a thought shabby, dusty, and tarnished —for these jolly trips had been for some time discontinued. While his hand was in, the Bey felt he might as well make a sweeping reform of it, and dismissed his harem, retaining one member of it, the better to conform to northern institutions. Now, it would seem, things are changed; and perhaps his faithful subjects, having required him to dismiss a ministry, may call upon him to construct a harem, to make his recantation more emphatic. If so, there may be yet days of jovial junketting in store for that neglected old vehicle.

With David I also made excursions among the silk-workers of Tunis, and watched men in dingy cells, not much bigger than sentry-boxes, working machines like the intestines of primitive pianos, and, by some magical process—for so it seemed—producing delicate tissues of the most exquisite arrangement of colour. Then he initiated me into the mysteries of the shashya-manufacture, by introducing me into the workshop of the Lincoln and Bennett of Tunis, where those red caps which form so prominent a feature in Oriental costume were to be seen in every stage of the process. Simple as the

shashya or tarboosh looks, a number of operations are required to produce it. In its normal state, it is nothing more than a very closely-knitted white woollen night-cap. But after that it undergoes a distracting variety of processes. It is soaked and blocked, and milled and fulled, and dyed and combed, and clipped, over and over again, before it makes its appearance in the world as that blood-red, blue-tasselled cap which is to the Mahommedan world, from the Sultan to the Fellah, much what the 'chimney-pot' is to Christendom. Those made at Tunis have long had the command of the market, from their superior fineness, softness, and durability, as well as the brilliancy of their colour, which is said to be due to some property in the water in which they are soaked. The trade must have been, and probably to a great extent still is, a lucrative one. It once gave employment to about 20,000 people; but though the real Tunis shashya is still in great demand in the East, it has not now the exclusive possession of the market.

The shashya naturally reminds one of the Jew Here, as in most Mahommedan cities, he is compelled to distinguish himself from the true-believing citizen; and the distinguishing mark is a black instead of a scarlet shashya. He generally, however, indemnifies himself by being very splendid in the other portions of his attire, where there is no restriction. In all ages

and countries, fine raiment seems to have been, and to be, the besetting weakness of the Hebrew. Even David, who, as an Algerine by birth, and therefore a French Jew, wore his red cap proudly, was so gorgeously got up that it was quite a pleasure to walk with him; and when we strolled, as we did several times, into the quarter inhabited by his people, it was like getting into the tulip department at a flower-show. The women, who go about the streets unveiled, were, if possible, even finer than the men, revelling in wonderful upper garments, baggy satin breeches of the brightest hues, and tight-fitting stockings of some golden stuff, that made their legs look exactly like the stout arm that we see protruding from the wall of a gold-beater's premises. Some of the younger ones are, unquestionably, strikingly handsome: David's wife and sister-in-law, for instance, were most charming young persons. But their beauty seems to run to fat, with advancing years, to a horrible extent.

Still, this gorgeousness had none of that vulgarity about it which shines so in the scarf and waistcoat of young Levi, as he goes down Houndsditch to take his holiday. This may have been in part due to its being in keeping—to its being so thoroughly Oriental in character. It seemed rather the attempt of an ancient race to preserve the memory of their ancestral splendour, even in the land of the stranger and in spite of persecution. For this reason, and also—barbarous as

it may seem to say so—because, undoubtedly, a little persecution marvellously improves the Jew in a picturesque point of view, he shows to far more advantage in a Mahommedan than in a Christian city. The round hat and prim-cut garments of Europe, and the comfortable self-satisfied air he acquires, do not become his features half so well as the Oriental garb, and the fixed expression of patient hatred which he wears in the streets of the Moslems.

To leave without spending a morning at Carthage was, of course, not to be thought of; so I engaged a vehicle for the hill of St. Louis. The site of Carthage may be roughly described thus:—It is an irregular square, whose sides are between two and three miles long, and whose angles point to the four points of the compass. The north-east and south-east sides are bounded by the sea, and the south-west by the Lake of Tunis. The fourth side is now not so well defined. There can be little doubt that, when Carthage flourished, the bay which lies to the west of Cape Camart (the north angle of the square) cut much more deeply into the land than it does at present, and that the city was connected with the mainland by a comparatively narrow isthmus, and not, as now, by a broad plain. This has been the doing of the River Mejerdah—a classic stream, by the way, coming down from Mount Atlas, flowing past the bloody field of Zama on to Utica, but chiefly known in history in connection

with the enormous serpent encountered on its banks by Regulus and his army, and afterwards preserved in some museum at Rome. The encroachment of the land on the sea has evidently gone on even since the Arab invasion; for there, near Cape Camart, is the Arab village of Marsa, meaning in Arabic 'the port,' where there is nothing of the kind at present. The fourth side of the square, therefore, is now an imaginary line, drawn from Cape Camart to the lake across the plain which stretches between Tunis and Carthage. At the southern corner of the square is the narrow neck of land on which the Goletta stands, and which separates the lake from the sea; and from it the land rises gradually into a range of low hills, running along the south-eastern side until they end in Ras Bousaid, or Cape Carthage, the eastern angle of the square. On the first of these hills stands the chapel of St. Louis, kept up by the French, a commonplace little affair, very clean and neat, and looking very like an occasional Rhine or Swiss 'object of interest.' A few gatherings from Carthage are to be seen in the garden;—a tolerably well-preserved mosaic, some fragments of statues, and tablets with bas-reliefs and inscriptions. But these are not the attractions which draw one to the spot. These are but relics from the ruins of the Roman city built on the ruins of Carthage the Great. The real *religio loci* springs from the fact that the ground you stand upon is the site of the Byrsa of ancient Carthage, the citadel and heart of the old Punic city. Passing

CARTHAGE.

'Great Carthage lowe in ashes cold doth lie,
Her ruines poore the herbes in height scant passe.'—FAIRFAX'S *Tasso*.

out from the precincts of the chapel, and strolling northwards towards the headland and village of Sidi Bousaid, you have the entire site of the greatest commercial city of antiquity lying before you as in a map. From your feet down to the sea there runs a slope of rough broken ground. To the right, near the shore, is a semicircular pool, like a piece of neglected canal. It marks the place of the Cothon, the port of Carthage. On the left, below you, are certain structures which resemble boilers embedded in the earth. These are the cisterns which were fed by the aqueduct whose ruins you may trace along the plain behind. And this is about all that remains of Carthage to the eye. As you stroll along, you find bits of mosaic, fragments of chiselled marble, and such evidence of a city—but nothing more. For the traveller from the Cassiterides —those remote islands of the Northern Sea, which were to ancient Carthage much what New Zealand is to us —there is no broken arch on which he may take his stand, no ruined temple of the Punic gods to sketch. From the top of a heap of rubbish he may trace the features of a rusty hill-side, a strip of thirsty plain relieved by a patch or two of Arab cultivation, a broken line of low-lying shore—and this is all the memento of Carthage he can carry away on the leaf of his pocket-book. And yet there is a certain fitness about this complete annhilation which makes one almost feel as if the presence of arches and temples would be an impertinence. There is something in it suggestive

of the stubborn pride of the old city; as though she had decreed to be either Carthage, or nothing—absolutely nothing, not even an 'interesting ruin.' Better far for Rome's great rival to lie dead and buried in that rubbish-strewn plain, than to live on as a frowsy Moorish city. Tunis might, without shame, accept such a fate. *She* always took the world easy: she never gave any invader much trouble: she let Regulus, Scipio, Charles V. walk in, without trying their tempers dangerously; and she has her reward. Having seen, probably the rise, certainly the magnificence, of Carthage, there she is still, at the other side of the lagoon, not a very great or splendid or powerful city; but still an existing city, and, in spite of occasional revolutions, a city with a reasonably good expectation of life, as actuaries would say. But this was no destiny for Carthage.

Thus moralising on living dogs and dead lions, I went on board the steamer lying off the Goletta; and the rest of the afternoon was spent in watching that beautiful African coast unfold itself as in a rolling panorama. Bold headlands, wooded to the water's edge; rocky islands, dotted with sea-fowl; sleepy sandy bays, fringed with palms,—all these came and went, till night shut up the show; and when I next looked out upon the world, it was from the roadstead at Bona, and on a world noisy with French drums, and active with red-breeched French soldiery.

CHAPTER XIII.

A CHAPTER OF HINTS.

ALGERIA may now be fairly considered as annexed to the dominions of the vacation tourist. A steamer bound for some one of its ports leaves Marseilles almost every day. The voyage is an affair of only two days. In the country itself there is every facility for travelling. Public vehicles of some sort ply between all the principal towns, and in the interior, and in cases where there is no regular conveyance, mules or horses can always be hired, and generally at the Government tariff. The difficulties about board and lodging are in no case greater than in any of the recognised rambling-grounds of Europe. At places like Algiers and Bona there is hotel accommodation far superior to that of most provincial towns in France. At others, like Constantina, Setif, or Guelma, it is, at any rate, no worse; while farther inland there are auberges and caravanserais in which the traveller will be at least as well off as in the asylums to which he has at times betaken himself in the out-of-the-way districts of Switzerland, the Tyrol, or the Pyrenees. Even should he feel inclined to go still farther afield, the tents of the Bedouins are open to him;

and, with certain drawbacks, a sojourn with the sons of Ishmael has its charms. The experiment is a perfectly safe one, occasional insurrections notwithstanding. The French will take good care to prevent the adventurous tourist from running any risk among the revolted tribes.

The attractions, too, are considerable. In the first place, Algeria has the merit of being new ground. No loyal subject of the 'monarch of mountains' will ever, I trust, throw off his allegiance to that glorious alpine land where he has spent his heartiest and healthiest holidays. No one, I hope, will ever be guilty of the treason of saying he is tired of Switzerland. But the time will come when the most faithful follower of the Order of the Alpenstock will feel the want of a change for a season, if it be only that he may return to his beloved playground with renewed relish. Algeria, too, has its mountains: not Alps in their sublimity, but still full of a strange wild beauty all their own; and in the Kabylie and in the Auress he will find himself surrounded by mountain scenery, the claims of which, wedded as he may be to snow-peak and glacier, he will scarcely venture to deny. But Algeria has scenery even more striking to the European eye than its noble mountain ranges, with all their accessories of rich valleys, wild glens, and boundless tracts of oak and cedar forest. To a northerner, the first sight of the palm-groves of an oasis in the Sahara is a new sensation. In his dreams, working out the memories of some childish picture-book, he may have seen something

of the sort; but, even in dreams, under our skies the imagination can hardly conjure up the colours of the African reality—the rich glossy green of the feathery foliage, the drooping clusters of golden fruit, the endless tracery of light and shade, the glimpses, caught between the slender stems, of a boundless tawny plain beyond quivering under a southern sun—the tropical air of the whole scene. Even that vast monotonous plain itself, the 'bahar bela ma,' the 'sea without water,' of the Arabs, has a certain charm about it. Here the traveller sits, as it were, on the farthest shore of civilisation. Thus far, ages ago, civilised man had penetrated; but beyond that dim line which bounds the vision southward, he has been always powerless. Hardy voyagers have gone forth and foundered, or lived to tell a tale of savage man and pitiless nature; but they have left no track on the waves of the Desert. Herodotus could only describe that region by a string of negatives—*ἔρημος καὶ ἄνυδρος καὶ ἄθηρος καὶ ἄνομβρος καὶ ἄξυλος ἐστι ἡ χώρη*—and the mystery which hung over it in his day has not yet been cleared away.

Indeed, the Sahara abounds with new sensations for the traveller fresh from Europe. The 'ships of the desert' putting out to sea with their Bedouin crews, the low brown tents of the nomads, the mud-built towns clustering under the shade of the palm-groves—all these form a new world, and yet a world within a week's journey of London.

This brings me to another of the merits of the

country. A six weeks' or two months' ramble in Algeria is no bad substitute for the more ambitious enterprise of an Eastern tour. It is not everybody's fortune to reach Cairo any more than Corinth, and many a man with strong cravings after Oriental life is kept in Europe by considerations of time and money. He may satisfy them in Algeria at an expenditure, in either way, not much exceeding that required for an ordinary holiday ramble in most parts of Europe. Of the picturesque, bizarre—what may be called the Arabian Nights' side of Oriental life—he will find endless illustrations in the towns, above all in Tunis, which may fairly be included as coming within the Algerian tour. A fellow-traveller who had visited both cities in the course of the same summer told me that Tunis struck him as having more unadulterated orientalism about it than Cairo. As for that other phase, the old patriarchal life of the tented Arab, he will see it in Algeria in far greater perfection, probably, than in Syria or any other part of the true East—unless, indeed, he chooses to follow in the footsteps of the adventurous Mr. Palgrave.

To the zoologist and the botanist, a country where they will find the animal and vegetable life of Europe and of Africa flourishing side by side can hardly be uninteresting. For the geologist there is an ample and, as yet, untrodden field in the ranges of the Atlas; and the site of the richest colonies of the Roman Empire—a land on whose plains the tokens of Roman art and

wealth and power lie thick—where the Bedouin builds his fireplace with the fragments of a temple, while his flocks shelter themselves from the sun under the walls of a ruin which would make the fortune of a town in South France or Italy,—a land like this must have something in it for the tourist of antiquarian or historical proclivities.

So much for the inducements. Should they be in any case held sufficient, let me offer the intending traveller a few hints founded on the experience of two seasons' ramblings over the most interesting part of the country.

First, as to the travelling season. The pleasantest time, I think, is during the months of September and October, or even the latter half of August. It must be borne in mind that there are two distinct regions in Algeria, with very different climates—the Tell and the Sahara. The watershed—a word which I use here in the sense of 'water-parting'—of the Mediterranean and the Desert may be taken as the boundary line between the two. On the north side of this line, which does not by any means run parallel with the coast, the country is generally mountainous, with high-lying plateaus and broad valleys. Anyone who wishes to understand the physical geography of North Africa must disabuse himself of the notion which writers on the subject generally encourage, that there are three mountain chains—the Great, Middle, and Little Atlas.

According to this statement of the case, the range of the Djurdjura, which ranks second in height in Algeria, and is perhaps the most imposing group of peaks in the whole series, would be a part of the Little Atlas; while the comparatively insignificant mass of the Djebel Khellouf would appear as the Grand Atlas, because it happens to lie more inland. The fact is, the Atlas does not consist of a continuous chain or chains of mountains running parallel with the coast. It is rather a succession of short ranges parallel with each other, and inclined to the coast at a small angle. The key to the system is the great snowy range of Morocco, which, if the reader looks at the map of Africa, he will perceive running in a north-easterly direction from the Atlantic near Santa Cruz to the shore of the Mediterranean west of Oran. This is but the precursor of a series of ranges inferior in extent and altitude, but with the same direction, which succeed one another, as I have already described them, like waves of the sea, and spread all over the district of the Tell from the Morocco frontier to the Gulf of Cabes. Across the Strait of Gibraltar we have the Sierra Nevada, the Sierra Morena and the mountains of Spain generally, running in the same north-easterly direction, which, travelling farther, we find in general preserved by the Alps of Dauphiné, Switzerland, and the Tyrol. Nay, more—continuing on the line of the Sierra Nevada, we find it preserved across the Mediterranean by the Balearic

Isles and the highlands of Corsica. To the eye, therefore, of the physical geographer, who disregards all such accidents as straits and seas, the Atlas is simply a portion of the same mountain system that prevails in South-Western Europe, and the western basin of the Mediterranean nothing more than the submerged continuation of the plain of Grenada or the Metidja of Algiers.

These details are necessary to explain to the reader why it is he may expect to find in the Tell a climate and temperature far more like those of Southern Europe than of Africa. Travelling for the most part along broad valleys and plains at a considerable elevation above the sea, and screened from the hot winds of the desert by overlapping ranges of lofty mountains, he will not suffer more from the heat than in many regions of considerably higher latitude; and if he can endure the South of Italy in August, he will hardly find Algeria oppressive.

But in the Sahara it is altogether different. Once clear of the mountains, he is in the genuine unmodified Africa. Passing southwards through that wondrous gorge of El Kantra is almost like passing from Kew Gardens into the great Palm-house; and from what I have heard of the Dog-days at Biskara, the thermometer would seem to be nearly as severely tried there in summer as it is at Acapulco, according to the Yankee sailor, who, in reply to a 'guess' that it stood at so many degrees,

said, 'Sir-ree, you air wrong: it don't stand at all—it *can't*!—it lies down, and that's a fact. Sometimes at sundown it does git up, and then it stands at about a hundred and fifty.' But in the month of October the heat is by no means so formidable; and in the fine dry air of the Sahara, a temperature which would be almost intolerable in a moister climate may be borne without inconvenience.

For these reasons, I should advise such a route as would place excursions in the Sahara as late in the tour as possible. Algiers, I think, on the whole, the best port to land at. This 'devilish town,' as the quaint old traveller William Lithgow calls it, is a capital introduction to travel in North Africa. In its crowded streets the tourist will find samples of all the people he is about to mix with, and specimens of all the costumes of Algeria, native and imported, from the dingy bernous of the Kabyle to the brilliant raiment of the Jew, who, under the impartial French rule, blooms out like a prize tulip; and from the stately flowing robes of the southern kaïd to the tight uniform of the infantry sous-lieutenant. Quite as great are the contrasts presented by the narrow winding alleys of the old Moorish town, climbing the hill up to the Casbah more like staircases than streets, and the Place Royale, and Rue Bab-azoun, and Rue Bab-el-Wed of the new French town, with their arcades à la Rue de Rivoli, handsome shops, cafés, hotels and theatres, flaneurs, omnibuses and barrel-

organs, and all things proper to a European city. In Algiers he will be able to supply himself with any requirements for his journey which he may have omitted, just as well as in any town in Europe. It is, besides, admirably situated for a starting-point. I cannot speak from personal experience of the province of Oran; but from what I have heard of it I do not feel inclined to recommend the traveller to spend any time in visiting it, unless, indeed, he has plenty to spare. The scenery is far inferior to that in the provinces of Algiers and Constantina, and it is singularly poor in what are called 'objects of interest,' the remains of the old Moorish city of Tlemsen being almost the only thing worth seeing. Indeed, it is by no means unlikely that his visit may be prevented by some revolt of the tribes like that which is at present in progress. Oran is the hotbed of Mahommedan fanaticism in Algeria. It is, par excellence, the country of the Marabouts, where the prophets go about predicting the advent of the Moula Saa—the master of the hour—and the speedy termination of French rule. It is the country of Abd-el-Kader, and of Bou Maza, and has given, and is likely for many years to give, ten times as much employment to the troops as the remaining three-fourths of the French possessions. If, however, he desires to see Oran, and there is no obstacle of this sort, he can make the journey as well from Algiers as by going direct from Marseilles. There are steamers every week, and

he can return by Orleansville and the valley of the Shellif.

To the south-west of Algiers there lies a district to which he ought to devote a few days. Round Blidah (to which there is now a railway), Milianah, and Medeah, there is a beautiful country, full of magnificent mountain scenery and rich vegetation. If he extends his ramble in this direction as far as Boghar, about 100 miles south of Algiers, he will find himself on the verge of the Sahara, which runs farther north here than anywhere else. It will be best, however, to resist the temptation to penetrate farther south for the present, and to return to Algiers and start for the Grande Kabylie. A diligence runs (daily, I think) across the famous plain of the Metidja up to the little town of Tiziouzou, which lies almost at the foot of the Djebel Djurdjura on the north side. Thence, a three hours' climb on foot or mule-back will bring him to Fort Napoleon, perched high up on one of the northern spurs of the Djurdjura. Inside the walls there is a tolerably comfortable auberge, and a couple of days may be well spent in rambles in the surrounding Kabyle country, which is here a region of narrow mountain crests, crowned with villages, and olive and fig gardens, and separated by tortuous ravines, many hundreds of feet in depth, and with sides all but precipitous. From Fort Napoleon he should cross through the heart of the Kabylie to Bordj-bou-Areridj by the way of Beni Mansour

and the country of the Beni Abbes, a three or it may be four days' journey. This is the route described in Chapter VII., and he will see that it may be slightly modified by passing through the gorge of the Biban, instead of along the mountain ridge and plateau of Bouni above it. At Borj-bou-Areridj he will find a regular conveyance for Setif. There is a shorter and easier route to Setif from Fort Napoleon, that described by the authoress of 'Through Algeria,' which keeps to the north and crosses the valley of the Sahel at Akbou; but it is far inferior in point of scenery. Setif need not detain the traveller long; it is a rather commonplace French-African town, of a type of which he will be a little tired before his rambles are over: and the country round it, and on to Constantina, is dreary in the extreme. Instead of adopting what would seem the more natural course, that of taking the diligence direct for Constantina, let him make a détour to the north-east by Djemilah, a spot rich in ruins and scenery, and Milah, a pleasant little town, 'surrounded with gardens and plentifully stocked with fountains,' as Dr. Shaw describes it; and then, turning nearly due north, reach the coast at Collo. By this time he will have been out at least nine or ten days, reckoning from Algiers, some of them, too, days of somewhat rough travelling, and a plunge or two in the Mediterranean will be by no means amiss. From Collo he should follow the line of the coast to Philippeville.

To the south-east of Philippeville lies the garden of the province of Constantina, and the only district in Algeria, except perhaps some favoured spots in the neighbourhood of Algiers, where there seems to be anything like true colonisation. There are well-kept roads, well-cultivated fields, and pleasant little struggling villages with eminently colonial names, such as Gastonville, Robertville, St. Charles, Jemmapes. He can go to Jemmapes by diligence, or, if energetic, by a rugged path across the Filfilah mountain and down the valley of the Wed Soudan, through the beautiful forest and mountain scenery mentioned at page 197; and thence across to the high road at either St. Charles or El Arrouch, to meet the diligence for Constantina. That strange weird old city deserves at least a couple of days. Historical associations do not necessarily involve a great expenditure of time. One may pay the tribute due to the memories of Jugurtha and Syphax, and the loves of Masinissa and Sophonisba, just as well in an evening's stroll as in a fortnight. But at Constantina there is abundant employment for the eye after sentiment has had its way. The narrow, winding streets, more 'outlandish' in their quaintness than even those of Algiers, and rich in 'bits' of Moorish, or rather Kabyle, life—for Constantina is far more Kabyle than Moorish or Arab in its population—above all, the wonderful site of the city, and that unearthly-looking chasm that cuts it off from the surrounding mountains,

into which it is, somehow, impossible to gaze without thinking of Dante,—these are among the things which make Constantina a proper loitering-place. What I have said of the country round Setif applies even in a greater degree to that round Constantina. In fact, a belt of very uninteresting country runs right across the Tell of the province from Algiers to Tunis, between the richly-wooded regions which lie along the coast and the edge of the Sahara. For many miles round Constantina nothing is to be seen but bare treeless mountains, occasionally picturesque in outline, but generally monotonous in the extreme, varied by broad valleys and stretches of plain, all—at least in autumn—wearing the same sad russet-coloured robe.

There is little lost, therefore, in taking the night diligence to Batna. Batna itself need not detain him any more than Setif; but a day at least must be given to the ruins of the old Roman city at Lambessa; and if mountain-climbing be among his weaknesses, another, perhaps, may be devoted to ascending the Djebel Tougourt. From Batna, the diligence, passing between the ranges of the Auress and the Soultan, descends the southern slopes of the Atlas to El Kantra, where the traveller enters the Sahara by that wonderful gorge which forms such a worthy gate to 'Africa and golden joys.' He will do well to let the diligence drop him here, and, availing himself of the hospitalities of the caravanserai, spend the three or four days that will

elapse before it again passes on its journey south, in rambles about this, his first oasis, and the mountains in its neighbourhood. The diligence will then take him to Biskara, about thirty miles farther south. About half-way, on the left hand, he will see the salt mountain of El Outaia, one of the chain of hills of salt that Herodotus speaks of. It is hardly worth making a halt for it, however. He should give a few days to Biskara for wandering through the palm-groves, which stretch southward for two or three miles, where, under the shade of the palms, he will find the clusters of Saharan hamlets, with their gardens of pomegranates and pumpkins and red peppers, that make up the *ensemble* known as the oasis of Biskara; where the turtle-doves flit from branch to branch, and the solemn camels stalk gravely by, and wolfish dogs bark at him the bark of primitive dogs, and naked round-eyed Arab children sit in the dust wondering at him, and he finds himself in a region of sights and sounds and scents all new. A ride due south out into the plain is to be recommended, and an excursion to Sidi Okbah, where the Arab general of the same name —he who founded the holy city of Kairwan—lies buried. He will see the oasis, fifteen miles off, to the south-east, as he emerges from under the palm-trees of Biskara. If he does not object to three or perhaps four days' rough travelling, with such night-quarters as he may find in native villages, let him make for Krenchela,

through the heart of the Auress, a route which will introduce him to wild scenery and people. It will be advisable, however, first to consult the Bureau Arabe at Biskara, and, if necessary, get letters to the men in authority along the line. If this cannot be done, he had better return to Batna by the diligence and ride to Krenchela along the north side of the Auress. Krenchela, the valley of Ourten, and the scenery of the Auress in the neighbourhood, deserve a halt; after which he may proceed to Tebessa, by the route described in Chapter IX., through the country of the Nememshah—a rougher journey but far more interesting than the route by Ain Beïda. Tebessa is well worth a halt of two or three days, for the sake of its antiquities and environs. Thence a two days' ride north-west brings him to Ain Beïda, and two days more, due north, to Guelma. Guelma is a pleasant, lively little place, and there is much in the neighbourhood worth seeing—Hammam Meskoutin, the upper valley of the Seybouse, and the Mahouna, the scene of most of Jules Gérard's exploits. At Guelma the traveller is once more in the region of civilisation and of diligences, and he can roll over the hills to Bona in the coupé in comparative luxury. Bona is one of the most delightful towns in North Africa. 'Antiquis dilectus regibus Hippo' is the description which Silius Italicus gives; and the ancient kings were men of taste. The old Hippo Regius, however—the City of the Kings and of St. Augustine—did

not occupy exactly the site on which the modern Bona stands. Such remains of it as are still to be seen—and there is not much, except a group of cisterns like those at Carthage—lie upon the woody hills that rise about a mile to the south of the new town, which stands more immediately on the shore and under the noble mountain of the Edough. The Arabic name of Bled el Annaba—the land of jujubes—is highly suggestive of the environs; though olives, carobs, figs, pomegranates, and a host of fruit-trees have an equal share with the jujube in giving its peculiar look of luxuriance to the neighbourhood of Bona. The Hôtel de l'Orient I think the pleasantest hotel in all Algeria; and after a couple of months of ups and downs, and occasional kous-kous diet, varied by fowls which seem to have devoted the tender times of early chickenhood to the severest calisthenics, a breakfast in that spacious *salle à manger* is a delightful process. With the cool sea-breeze blowing in on you, as you pass lightly from the water-melon to the absurd-looking little oysters of the Barbary coast, and then by several stages of queer but toothsome fish, and cutlets, and the partridges of the Edough, on to that nest of juicy rubies enclosed in the portly pomegranate, you feel at peace with all creation, and can forgive even the flea that sought your blood among the huts of the Kabyles a month before. The steamer from Marseilles puts in to Bona every Tuesday evening, and leaves for

Tunis at noon the following day, leaving Tunis, or rather the Goletta, on the afternoon of Sunday. The traveller will therefore have the opportunity—and he ought if possible to avail himself of it—of spending three clear days at Tunis and Carthage. On his return he may, if he prefers it, land at Bona, and go to Philippeville by diligence, for the steamer remains at anchor in the roadstead at Stora for at least twenty-fours hours after its arrival from Bona. At noon on Wednesday it leaves for Europe; and by about that time on Friday he may expect to find himself steaming past the Château d'If into Marseilles harbour.

Here he has the most comprehensive and at the same time compact route that I can suggest, after two seasons' experience of rambling in Algeria. It leaves, I think, but little unseen of what really deserves to be seen in the provinces of Algiers and Constantina. The distance travelled (not reckoning the voyage to Tunis) will be, in round numbers, 1,000 miles, about 400 of which may be done on wheels; the remainder on mule-back, or, in the cool of the morning, and on mountain journeys like the passage of the Djurdjura, on foot. As soon as the traveller becomes sufficiently callous, he will much prefer riding to going by diligence, except where the country is such as to make it desirable to get over it as soon as possible. The time required for it will be about two months, exclusive of the time occupied by a journey into Oran; time which I must say I think might be

more agreeably spent elsewhere. It may, however, easily be expanded or contracted to suit the convenience of the traveller: for instance, the détour by Milah, Collo, Philippeville, &c., might be omitted, or the journey from Tebessa to Guelma extended, by going by Tiffesh, Souk-Arras, and the fine forest country of the Beni Salah on the Tunis frontier. On these points the traveller must be guided by his own convenience and the map.

It is hardly necessary to say, there is no handy map which will be to the Algerian traveller what Leuthold or Ziegler is to the Swiss tourist. The best is the Government map, in six sheets, two for each province, on a scale of about seven miles to the inch. A tolerably good general travelling map, on a scale of about twenty-four miles to the inch, is appended to Barbier's 'Itinéraire de l'Algérie,' published by Hachette. The quarters of the different tribes are well shown, but it is far from accurate in matters of mountain topography. The Itinéraire above mentioned contains a good deal of useful matter, but does not display much practical knowledge of the country, and is by no means to be trusted in its recommendations of inns at the towns. It contains a short Arabic vocabulary, giving a pronunciation which is remarkably unintelligible to the natives. The best books for getting up the small amount of Arabic required for travelling purposes in the remote regions are, I think, Roland de Bussy's '*Idiome d'Alger*,

ou Dictionnaire Français-Arabe et Arabe-Français.' published by Bastide, Place Royale, Algiers—the dictionary is preceded by a short and simple grammar; and as the words are given in Arabic characters, the reader, as soon as he has ascertained the European equivalent for each letter, will be able, with a little practice, to make a sufficiently close attempt at the pronunciation;—and '*Dialogues Arabes-Français,*' by Auguste Martin, published by Barrois, Quai Voltaire, Paris, which will be very useful as a repertory of ordinary phrases and expressions. With these two, and improving, by practice with his Arab guide, the vocabulary acquired by reading, the traveller will soon have a command of the language sufficient, at any rate, for his comfort when beyond the reach of interpreters. I do not mean to say he will be able to converse; but he will generally succeed in making himself understood in a rough way, by means of an inartificial dialect, corresponding to that which is so effective in the mouths of our compatriots on the Rhine.

For general information about the country, Dr. Shaw's 'Travels or Observations relating to several parts of Barbary,' Oxford 1738, is, old as it is, the best and fullest book he can turn to. Besides being a scholar and an antiquary, Dr. Shaw was an enthusiastic explorer. Some regions, such as the Grande Kabylie and the Auress, seem, judging by his maps, to have been closed to him; but, with some few exceptions of this sort, there

is hardly a district between the Morocco frontier and the east coast of Tunis which he has not personally explored in the most painstaking way, and hardly a village, ruin, or river, of which he has not left a description. In fact, so full is his account of Barbary, that, if ever the time comes when a 'Murray's Handbook for Algeria' is required, all that will be necessary will be to reprint Shaw, with notes giving the names of hotels and other information up to the latest date. Dr. Russell's 'Barbary States' is a good epitome of the history, ancient and modern, of these countries; and for a view of the actual state of things, the intending tourist should consult 'A Residence in Algeria,' by Madame Prus, and Mr. G. Wingrove Cooke's excellent and amusing letters to the 'Times,' in their collected form.

In the matter of costume, the main point is to avoid giving way to the idea that, because his destination is Africa, the proper outfit will be of that filmy, gossamer sort recommended for the Overland Route to India. He should bear in mind that in the Tell country, at least, his track will be through regions at a considerable elevation above the sea. The plain of the Medjana, on which he will descend from the heights of the Kabylie, lies as high as Chamouni; the plateau of Batna is even higher; Constantina itself is somewhere about 2,000 feet above the sea level. The sun may be powerful at noon, but the nights and mornings are apt

to be decidedly chilly even in the autumn months; and it is far better to err on the substantial side in the way of clothing. It is by far the lesser evil to be heated than to be chilled; and for that matter, good thick clothing, not too heavy, and as loose as possible, is the very best protection against heat. He need not, therefore, make any alteration in the costume he affects on an ordinary walking tour, unless it be in the direction of extra substance. The underwood of the Atlas is thorny and remorseless. I once started for a three days' ramble in a pair of new flannel trousers, and came back almost a Highlander minus the kilt. There are, however, one or two additions to it which he must make. The first and most important is a girdle of some soft woollen stuff, to be wound as tightly as possible round the loins and stomach. This is essential to prevent the chills after perspiration, and consequent attacks of dysentery. At Marseilles, Algiers, or in any town, he can buy one of the red ceintures which are the 'mode' in Algeria; but I have always found a belt of flannel eight or ten inches wide, and long enough to go twice round, worn next the skin, equally efficacious and far more comfortable. Of course, one of the pith hats used in India would, under the fierce sun of the Sahara, be very pleasant; but the ordinary felt wide-awake will answer all purposes, if he winds some soft, light-coloured stuff round it, turban-wise, leaving the ends hanging down so as to screen the neck and the

side of the face next the sun. A plaid, I look upon as a most valuable ally, as a protection from sun or rain; or, folded into a pad, against the bony developments of your horse or mule, for saddles are not common. It serves, besides, as a wrap in the morning and a coverlet at night. The bernous of the country is also an excellent travelling-companion. It is easily carried, quickly put on and off; the hood gives ample shelter from the sun; it makes a capital sleeping-cloak for camping out, to which the traveller may possibly be reduced on some occasion, or for passing the night in an Arab tent or Kabyle hut, which will be his lot several times. If of a pretty close texture, it will, from its shape, throw off a great deal of rain; and, though it does not rain often in autumn in Algeria, when it does there is no mistaking what it means. Good bernouses are made in the Kabylie; and at one of the markets there, or at Constantina, a serviceable one may be bought for about twenty francs. There is a better and thicker sort, generally striped grey or black, and white, very popular in Tunis and Eastern Algeria for winter wear and travelling, which is somewhat dearer. At Algiers the prices of this and every article of the sort are double what they are elsewhere. The Jew shopkeepers there are lineal descendants of Barabbas, and their natural instincts are sharpened by the avidity with which the badauds who run over to Algiers go to Blidah and back, and call that the 'tour d'Afrique,' buy

up "objets indigènes" such as shashya caps made at Marseilles, and Tunisian silks direct from Lyons.

COUNTRY MARKET AND COSTUME.

A wallet made of some strong waterproof material, and large enough to hold provisions for two or three days, will be required; also a bottle, or perhaps two, for carrying wine or water on the march. The Spanish leather bottles used in the Pyrenees are good; but a better article is a crescent-shaped affair of stout macintosh with a band for slinging it over the shoulder, which may be got at any waterproofer's. Elaborate contrivances with screw-stoppers should be avoided. They are always sticking fast or leaking, or going wrong in some way: a good sound cork is far safer and better. A good-sized brandy-flask should also be carried, as in Algeria the

water nearly always requires qualification. The chief ailment the traveller has to guard against is dysentery, as might be expected in a country where the variations of temperature are so great, where the water is generally indifferent, and the temptations to excessive indulgence in fruit so powerful. He will do well, therefore, to carry a little laudanum and castor-oil; the former especially, as French chemists are not allowed to sell it. But care, prudence, and a little wholesome self-restraint when thirsty, are better than a whole medicine-chest full of nostrums. One great point is to live as well as possible. Bad food is just as likely a provocative as any of those I have mentioned. For this reason, among others, he ought to take with him a stock of portable soup of some sort for consumption in quarters where proper nourishing food is not to be had. Tea also should be carried, for there are few things more refreshing after a long, hard, and hot day's ride. It is a good plan to make up little cartridges of muslin after Galton's plan, each containing the proper charge of tea and sugar for a large cup: one of these dropped into a tin mug of boiling water, and allowed to stand, will produce as good a result as the most civilised teapot in Christendom. The Arabs exhibit a very decided taste for tea; so a liberal supply may be required, and a second mug is perhaps desirable. There is no harm in having a few doses of quinine; though the mere tourist, if he lives well and is ordi-

narily careful, runs no risk of being attacked by the scourge of the French settlers, the deadly African fever that lurks in almost every valley of the luxuriant country lying along the coast. Like the lion, the fever specially affects the richest forest scenery of the northern slopes of the Atlas; and, like the lion, it retires as the forest disappears and the soil is brought into regular cultivation. Philippeville, once a hotbed of fever, is now, I believe, one of the healthiest settlements in the province. It is rapidly disappearing from Jemappes; though when I was there its traces were still deep upon every third face in the street. Hollow cheeks, and sunken eyes, and men in the prime of life crawling feebly about, leaning on sticks, and speaking in quavering whispers—all these were sufficiently common to show the cost of colonisation in North Africa.

There are one or two other drugs which it is desirable to have. If he can find a really effective protection against insect attacks, he should by all means provide himself with it. All the parasites known to entomology, 'without a miracle, are here in all their quarters,' as Dr. Shaw says. In time one gets case-hardened; but at first some of the 'insecticides' so popular in the South of France,—those of Bouvarel and Vicat, for instance, or the specific I saw advertised at Philippeville under the appropriate title of 'Poudre Bugnot,'—may give some relief. I cannot say I myself

have found any of them remarkably effectual. A mixture of sweet oil and castor oil strongly flavoured with pennyroyal and spirit of camphor, rubbed on the face, neck and hands, will go a great way towards keeping off mosquitoes.

To come to the last articles required. Whether he is a sportsman or not, he will find it worth while to carry a gun. Among other reasons, it will enable him to add many a succulent morsel to his provision-wallet at times when such an addition will be most welcome. I made the mistake of carrying a rifle, which proved to be almost useless. The only game, in fact, in Algeria that at all requires a rifle, is the feshtall, or mountain sheep; and that is a quarry which, unless he has plenty of time to spare, he had better not pursue. I do not think it is of any use for gazelle-shooting. From the want of cover on the plains of the Sahara, it is very difficult to stalk these wary little animals: the best way of getting a shot is, to lie behind a stone or tuft of brush and send your Arab round to drive them. But, as a gazelle is not much bigger in body than a hare, and goes bounding by like a cricket-ball, this is little better than chance-work for the best rifle-shot in the world. A smooth bore, loaded with one of Eley's heaviest shot cartridges, would, I think, bring the game to bag admirably. Even if he is tempted to try his fortune at lion or panther, a smooth bore, with a ball of twelve to the pound, will be more effective at close quarters than any sporting rifle, unless

it be some special weapon such as I have suggested at page 191. I should recommend a breech-loader, on account of the quickness with which the charge can be changed—an important point in a country where the game-list ranges from quail to lion. Fourteen gauge is, I think, the one most commonly used by the French; and he will find cartridge-cases of that size at most of the larger towns.

A rough sketch of the zoology of Algeria may not be amiss here. The lion and his ways, and those of his hunters, I have already referred to. He is scarce in the province of Algiers, but by no means uncommon in that of Oran. His chief habitat, however, is in the eastern side of the province of Constantina, in the mountainous, woody country near the coast, all along the Tunis frontier, and in the Auress. The panther is more widely distributed, being found in all three provinces wherever there is thick cover. The caracal, here called the lynx, and the tiger-cat, are common in the country between Constantina and the sea; and very beautiful skins of these animals, as well as of the ichneumon, or 'raton,' as the French call it, may sometimes be bought at the Arab markets. Hyænas are common enough everywhere from the Sahara to the coast. At El Kantra they are especially abundant, as are also jackals. Some of the older settlers have tried to persuade me that there are wolves in Algeria; but I suspect the origin of the story is (what I have been fre-

quently told as a fact), that in certain districts a variety of jackal, somewhat larger and stouter than the common one, is occasionally to be met with. One morning, on the banks of the Wed Sahel, I put up a jackal who, as he loped away, certainly seemed to me a larger animal than those I had seen among the sandhills at El Kantra. I believe it is now a settled point that the bear, though very rare, does exist in the Atlas. Shaw includes it in his list; and the Abbé Poiret, in his 'Voyage en Barbarie,' speaks of having seen the skin of one which had been killed in the neighbourhood of La Calle. But no mountaineer that I met had ever encountered one. Of the non-carnivorous animals, the wild boar is the commonest: although Herodotus says that neither the boar nor the stag is ever seen in Libya. Its habitat is the same as that of the lion and the panther. It is, I think, most abundant in the country about Philippeville, El Arrouch, and Jemappes. In the fruit season, the prickly-pear gardens are a pretty sure 'find' for these animals about dusk or in the early morning. In the day-time, they lie generally in the thick brushwood of the ravines; though now and then a glimpse may be got of one as he shifts his quarters or goes to drink. The stag is, I believe, altogether confined to one district—the forest country of the Beni Salah, near the Tunis frontier. The feshtall, or maned mouflon, I have described before. They are most numerous on the El Kantra mountains, but are to be

found in most places on the Sahara side of the Atlas, where the population is thin and the mountains steep and rugged. I never heard of them anywhere on the northern slopes. The gazelle abounds everywhere in the Sahara. The upper plain of El Kantra is frequently dotted with them in the early morning. There is a second species of gazelle, much larger and stronger, which keeps to the mountains, and is found in the same localities as the feshtall. Among the smaller animals may be mentioned the porcupine, which is pretty widely distributed, and the Barbary ape, which abounds all along the coast from Bona to the Grande Kabyle, especially in the neighbourhood of Collo. There is, I have been told, a wonderfully simple kind of trap sometimes used for the capture of these creatures. It consists of a moderately wide-mouthed bottle of clear glass, secured firmly to a stone, or the root of a tree, or any other convenient base. This is baited with a nut placed inside. The ape perceiving the nut, presently discovers by the inductive process that it is only to be got at by putting his hand down the neck. As soon as he grasps it, however, the hand becomes a fist too large for the mouth of the bottle. And now that passion which in the more highly developed animal is called avarice comes into play. Having got the nut, he objects to giving it up; and without giving it up, he cannot take his hand out of the bottle: so there he remains holding on to his property, till the trap-setter comes and takes him into

custody. As the Father of History would say, whether this be true I know not, but I write what is related.

For a full list of the birds, the reader may be referred to the Appendix to Davis's 'Ruined Cities in Africa.' The birds of prey are those which are most fully represented in Algeria. At the head of them stands the noble-bearded vulture, the lämmergier of the Alps, which is very common on the Djebel Mitlili and among the higher mountains of the South. The common griffon vulture appears in considerable numbers almost everywhere. Poised high over the city, he is always one of the features in that wonderful view from the heights above Constantina. Eagles, buzzards, and hawks of many kinds, abound to an extent that would drive a game-preserver frantic. The duck tribe, perhaps, comes next in point of variety. I once saw specimens of four or five different species taken out of the same game-bag. Among the waders, the most remarkable are the beautiful purple heron, the Numidian crane, and the flamingo, which is common in the neighbourhood of most of the salt-lakes. At Sidi Okbah the traveller is within the limits of the ostrich country, according to General Daumas, who is the best authority on all matters relating to the Sahara and the Desert; but I fancy the chance of seeing one there is not much better than that of seeing a chamois on the Mer de Glace. Of the game-birds, the first is the great bustard, the houbara of the Arabs, which is pretty common on the north of the Sahara, and on the

plateaus of the Atlas. At El Kantra, and in the country of the Nememshah, he may often be seen stalking across the plain like a turkey on stilts; but, from the nature of the ground, it is very hard to get near him. The little bustard, or 'poule de Carthage,' as the French call it, is more abundant, and much more easily bagged, as it lies like a partridge wherever there is any cover. It has, besides, I think, the merit of being the best game in Algeria from a gastronomical point of view. After the close of October, woodcocks are tolerably plenty in the woody country near the sea-coast; and, I believe, in the season, there is as much snipe-shooting to be had round the Lake of Fetzara, and in many other places, as any reasonable man could desire. Quails are abundant in the country round Guelma; plovers and red-legged partridges almost everywhere. The latter birds swarm in the underwood on some of the mountain sides, and in the more unfrequented parts are almost as tame as poultry. If I had carried a shot-gun, I might have made a fair bag without even dismounting, when riding across the country of the Beni Abbes in the Grande Kabylie.

I cannot encourage the tourist to expect much success at the four-footed game. He may, if lucky, knock over a boar or two in the Tell, or perhaps a few gazelles in the Sahara; but in general he will find the pursuit incompatible with travelling. It requires a great deal of patience, and more time than he will be enabled to

devote to it, besides taking him frequently far out of his route. But in the neighbourhood of his halting-place, and on the march, he will frequently find feathered game, not enough perhaps to make a 'bag,' but enough to satisfy his propensities if he is a sportsman, or help his collection if he is an ornithologist. It is advisable to have a 'permis de chasse' (to be obtained at any of the larger towns) for shooting in the civilised districts: in the out-of-the-way regions he can do as he likes.

There is another reason for his carrying a gun besides those I have mentioned: it looks well to have something of the sort in his hand if he goes much into Arab society. As a general rule, or at any rate along the beaten tracks, there is no more occasion for travelling armed than in France itself; but in the course of his wanderings he will frequently find himself in districts where the arm of France cannot protect his life, though it may subsequently avenge his death. I do not mean by this that the probable slaughter of a fellow-creature is to be reckoned among the *agrémens* of a tour in North Africa, or that in order to see the country he will be forced to fight his way, but simply that it is just as well to make such an appearance as will not tempt any free-living gentleman to take liberties. I have already said that I think the Arabs of Barbary—at least, of Eastern Barbary—by no means so lawless as they are generally represented; and I feel pretty sure that, once fairly among the tents anywhere, the traveller, unless he has got some special

knack of getting into scrapes, will be as safe as in a European hotel. If he incurs any risk, it will be on the route from point to point. He must remember, in the first place, that he is among people who do not hold the same views about human life that a European does; and, secondly, that in the outlying districts, such as for instance the country about Tebessa, and along the Tunis frontier, there are always certain vagrant and more or less predatory Arabs hanging about, who think very little indeed of knocking over a Christian. Even in the civilised country, as I know from my experience at Nechmeya, they are occasionally to be met with. It is on account of these gentry mainly, that it is always prudent to carry arms; not necessarily for the purpose of shooting them, but rather to warn them against trying to shoot you. They have a wholesome respect for European firearms, which, they know, have the property of going off without first missing fire three or four times, like their own guns; and they will be slow to attack a traveller whom they see provided with one of these miraculous instruments. For this reason a gun is a better travelling companion than a revolver; though a handy pocket revolver is to be recommended, if only for the confidence it gives if you happen to be thrown into suspicious company. In fact, the advice Warburton gives to travellers in the East applies with equal force to the case of the traveller in Algeria: 'Let no cockney laugh

you out of carrying arms—that is to say, if you visit the interior or live at all adventurously; they are essential not only to safety, but to dignity.'

This is the last hint I have to offer. If it does not deter you from the experiment of a vacation ramble in North Africa—*Bon voyage!*

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